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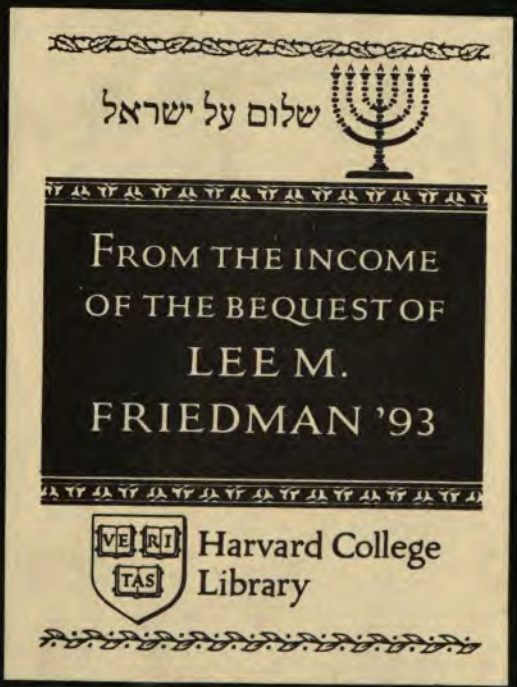

מֵחַיִל אֶל-חָיִל

# MEHAYIL EL HAYIL

"FROM STRENGTH TO STRENGTH"

מֵחַיִל אֶל-חָיִל

# MEHAYIL EL HAYIL

"FROM STRENGTH TO STRENGTH"

LESSONS FOR

THE USE OF JEWISH CHILDREN

LONDON
GEORGE BELL AND SONS, YORK STREET
COVENT GARDEN
1890

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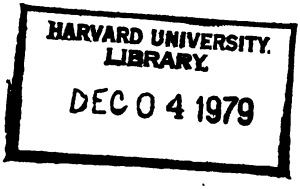


Friedman

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# PREFACE.

BY THE EDITOR.

THE object of this little work is to give to Jewish children a book designed for religious classes and home reading.

It seems almost needless to dwell on the fact that there is an extraordinary paucity of such books in our community. Less fortunate than their Christian neighbours, who are provided with an unfailing supply of literature adapted for children, Jewish parents and teachers have but a very limited choice of works suitable for spiritual and moral teaching.

In order to meet this want, however imperfectly, I have compiled this little book, which will, perhaps, prove the forerunner of others drawn on similar lines.

The lessons, or chapters, are from the pens of various writers; their diction is purposely very simple, but they touch upon questions which lie at the very root of all real education.

In the ordinary course of school-day life where the teacher's attention must be absorbed by the subjects which come within the range of the present severe examination tests, the purely spiritual and moral side of education runs a great chance of being neglected or pushed into the background. The Sabbath class, or Sabbath home reading, must make up for this deficiency if the child is to be educated, as well as instructed.

It is, therefore, most important that the teacher, often

a voluntary one, who devotes him or herself to the child's religious instruction, should have some book which lends itself to this branch of education. Such a book will not be found in the ordinary school library.

Now, although this little work can be placed in the hands of the children themselves, I should recommend that where it is used in classes it should be reserved by the teachers as a text-book from which to teach. And to the teachers I venture to address a few hints.

(1) As to how a Sabbath class should be conducted.

(2) As to how this book should be used.

To begin with: the children should be brightly and intelligently taught; their attention should be arrested from the very beginning; if they get tired and take a dislike to their Sabbath class, the effect will be to make them dislike all religious instruction, even religion itself. The best teaching is demanded for our day schools; why should we not be equally exacting for our Sabbath classes?

The teaching should be very animated, but the time spent in class should be short. The teacher should be well prepared by having a complete knowledge of his subject. Some good maps, especially one of Palestine, should be placed in sight of the pupils, and it would greatly add to the interest of the lesson if it could be illustrated from time to time by any objects to which the teacher may refer. Teaching through the ear should always be supplemented by teaching through the eye. The black-board, when the class is not held on the Sabbath, would often be found useful for the writing down of important words or difficult names, and in some cases it would be well for the pupils to have paper and pencil at hand for taking notes. The children should commit to memory, each week, some text from the Bible,

which they should repeat faultlessly to their teacher, thus storing their minds, not only with words of strength and comfort, but also with some of the finest passages of any existing literature.

The teacher should, if possible, claim the inspiriting aid of instrumental music or song for the class, encouraging the children to learn ennobling words, set to stirring tunes. These can have a good, healthy, moral tone, without being necessarily of a strictly sacred character; indeed, it would be almost impossible to find sacred words in English verse for our children, as we have no suitable hymnal for their use. But there is no reason why they should not also learn to sing both tunefully and expressively the יִגְדַּל, אֲדוֹן עוֹלָם, and other Hebrew chants.

After the children have been cheered by song, the teacher would do well to read some very short chapter or passage from the Bible, questioning the children at the close upon what has been read. This might be followed by another hymn, after which a chapter from this book would find its place in the morning's work. At the end of the reading I would suggest that the teacher should recite the שְׁמַע, taking due care that the children not only follow, but also understand the meaning of the words.

It is now time that I should give a few suggestions as to how this little book should be used by the teacher.

Out of the thirty-six addresses or chapters that it contains, eleven are entirely concerned with the Jewish holydays or festivals, whilst the remaining twenty-five bear more or less upon some spiritual or moral lesson, generally illustrated by a Bible story or character.

There is no reason why the chapters should be taken by the teacher in the order that I have given them: the

teacher in this case, as in many others, must be guided by his or her own judgment.

Between the chapters occur short poems, or verses, not actually bearing upon the subject of the addresses, but all suitable for children to commit to memory.

I will now suppose that the teacher is holding the book in her hands, and is about to give a lesson on the chapter entitled:

"An Open Window."

After the first sentence, the teacher will begin by asking the pupils to describe a room; they may, if they like, take their own class-room for an illustration.

They should mention the objects which it contains, and their use. The teacher should ask whether the children have ever heard of houses or rooms without windows. Of course, the reply might be: "Scotch or Irish cabins," which reply would necessitate pointing out Scotland and Ireland on the map. And then some account should be given of the appearance of a cabin, and of the hole in the roof which emits the smoke, as an open window would do in one of our houses. The teacher, in telling the class that we cannot exist without light or air, should be able to give some definition of light and air. He should draw from the children answers as to what gives light; as to what difference there is between sun and moon light; as to the length of daylight in summer and winter; as to the difference of the length of daylight in the extreme north and south, and centre of the globe. He should then direct the children's attention to the mines, where all work is carried on by borrowed light—the light of a lantern or lamp, and where the sunlight cannot penetrate.

A description of a coal mine, and of the part that children take in the work would interest the pupils. The next subject would be factories, and work-rooms,

where the air often becomes vitiated from insufficient ventilation.

The children should throughout give as many examples as they can for themselves, the teacher endeavouring to make them reflect. The lesson should be suggestive rather than merely instructive, great pains being taken to develop the children's reasoning powers, and to quicken their love of information. They should be led to read and search for themselves, and not to rest content with what they are taught in class.

The teacher should never cram or over-load the children's memories; her lesson should always be stimulating and rousing, rather than satisfying.

We will imagine that the teacher has now arrived at the sentence: "I am going to tell you about some other windows. They are invisible ones, but still they exist for the matter of that, as so many invisible things do." Here he should ask the children to give examples of invisible things, requiring such answers as Hope, Patience, Courage, Faith. Let him dilate upon the meaning of these qualities. Let him be very careful that the children grasp the meaning of the sentence: "There are windows in our own souls." He should explain how the soul can be said to have its window, like the room, how it can also, if it will, receive its supply of light and air. In quoting from the Psalms that occur in the address he is reading, he should ask the children to turn to the texts in their Bibles, and then bid one of the elder pupils write the words on the black-board. The children might be encouraged to commit the texts to memory, which would impress the lesson upon their minds. And here I may say that, whenever a passage or text is quoted from the Bible, the children should be told to look it out for themselves, and, should a Scriptural character or

event be mentioned, the teacher should never neglect to question the children about it, drawing out all their knowledge on the subject, and supplementing it with his own.

The teacher, in reading the sentence "the word of God," should ask the children if they can tell him the names of some of the Biblical books. He might then give them as much information as he can about the Bible; it is the history of their ancestors, and contains the finest literature of their race; its laws have become the groundwork of the law of all civilized people; the Commandments are incorporated in almost every creed.

The teacher has now arrived at this question: "Have you ever watched the rippling waters of a stream? have you seen how the surface is stirred?" Here the children's memories should be well exercised. Have they ever seen the ocean, a river, or lake? Let them describe any piece of water that they know; let them find it on the map. Ask them the names of any rivers mentioned in the Bible. Let them think of any great event which occurs in sacred history in connection with a sea or river, such as the passage of the Red Sea by Moses and the Israelites at the Exodus from Egypt, or the passage of the river Jordan by Joshua and the children of Israel. The teacher is now dilating upon the passage concerning "the Spirit of God." "We can all breathe it," he reads, "provided we can open the windows of our souls wide. But no doubt, for some whose heart and lungs may be weak, accustomed only to the impure air of the dismal chambers of their souls, the strong fresh air, when suddenly the window is flung open, is almost too strong and too fresh."

Here the teacher should make the children understand that those who are accustomed to lead ignoble lives

would find it hard to take in great and noble thoughts, and that those who are satisfied with material pleasures would not care for higher pursuits, which may require some struggle to attain, but which, once reached, lift the heart and soul upward, often transforming weak men and women into heroes and heroines.

There are both men and women who stand out conspicuously in all the pages of history, as having lived this higher life, men and women "who have drawn into themselves most freely and fully 'the Spirit of the Lord;' they are the inspired ones, the prophets, and seers." The children should now be asked to name some of the prophets of Scripture. But there are others, whose names do not occur in the sacred writings, and yet who seem to have lived an inspired, holy, or spiritually gifted life; they belong to men of all ages and all nations.

It would be well to cite some names and examples, such as Socrates, Marcus Aurelius, Maimonides, Moses Mendelssohn, Sir Isaac Newton, Howard, and (coming down to our own times) Mrs. Fry, Lord Shaftesbury, and Sir Moses Montefiore.

The teacher might dwell with profit on some of those examples, bringing the characters he describes well before his class.

The teacher has now arrived at this passage: "Who are those who try and teach us what is right and good for us to know? Those who put the best books before us, who let us hear the grandest music, see the pictures that teach us something noble, and inspire us to do great deeds."

The children might here be asked to give an example of some of their favourite books, or pieces of music, or of any picture that may have specially taken their fancy or imagination.

I think I have now thrown out sufficient hints to the teacher as to the way in which the lesson should be given. But, of course, there is no reason why he should adhere to my questions; others of a more searching nature may strike him, or he may find that mine are too many in number, or too diffuse in matter to be all brought within the area of one lesson.

Yet these will suggest to his mind the way in which I intend the addresses to be dealt with; they should be vehicles, not only for supplying religious instruction, but also for deepening and strengthening the devotional feelings of children. The teacher should beware of using stereotyped phrases; he should vary his teaching by ever-new and original questions, being never satisfied with his own knowledge, but always adding to his stores, treading fresh fields, and gathering in new harvests. His task may be difficult, but it will be a grateful one; let him turn to it hopefully and remember: "That the right faith of man is not intended to give him repose, but to enable him to do his work."

In order to do his work properly, whatever it may be, wherever it may lie, he must have the strength that is the outcome of well-developed moral qualities. Right conduct is the result of character; and it is the character of the child that we are endeavouring to build up by simple lessons on great subjects, leading him on, by gradual steps, "From strength to strength,"

MEHAYIL EL HAYIL.

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# MEHAYIL EL HAYIL.

"FROM STRENGTH TO STRENGTH."

## I.

## THE TEN COMMANDMENTS.

DEAR CHILDREN,

I AM going to talk to you to-day about the twentieth chapter of Exodus, containing the Ten Commandments, all of which, I am sure, you are able to repeat.

They were given originally to the children of Israel, but they have been claimed by most of the civilized people in the world, and, whilst Jewish children are taught to repeat them in their Sabbath classes, Christian children learn to say them in their Sunday schools.

They are written up in the synagogue, as well as in the Christian churches, and they find a place in the religious services of the Jews as well as in the prayer-books of our Christian neighbours.

I think it only right that we should note what we have in common with other people's faiths, and also where the difference lies, for it helps us to understand our neighbours.

We will divide the Ten Commandments into two columns, five on each side.

The first four teach us human beings our duty to God Himself; they refer to the relationship between God and man.



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They are directed against idolatry, against taking the Lord's name in vain, and contain the Commandment that touches on the seventh day, the *Sabbath.*

These are followed by the Fifth Commandment, which is still on the same column, and concerns the duties we owe to our parents.

It stands midway between the Commandments that relate to God and those which relate to our fellow-men.

And this is the very position that our parents hold; they stand next to God as regards their children, and when those children are very young, and do not know right from wrong, or good from evil, they take the place towards them of God Himself.

"Honour thy father and thy mother, that thy days may be long upon the land which the Lord giveth thee."

Then follow the five last Commandments, which all relate to the behaviour of man to man.

We are to respect each other's lives, property, good name, and not even covet our wealthier or happier neighbour's possessions.

Now let us return to the First Commandment.

It is as follows:

"I am the Lord thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage."

This hardly sounds like a Commandment,[1] but more like a declaration, a note of authority, as it were, for the rest.

God having made us a nation, having given us the priceless boon of freedom, now lays down those laws which we must keep if we wish to lead useful and happy lives.

[1] The Hebrew word translated commandment, is really "a word," an utterance, a declaration.

We next come to the Second Commandment:

"Thou shalt have no other gods before Me."

This Commandment is entirely directed against idolatry, the worshipping of images of gods, whether in the human form or in that of animals. This seems strange to us now, when we are in no danger of making idols of stone, silver or gold, and bowing down before them; but, in the old days of the Bible stories, idolatry was the recognized custom of the people amongst whom the children of Israel were thrown. The Egyptians were idolaters, so were the numerous tribes who dwelt in Canaan, and with whom the Israelites were soon to come into contact.

The *one* great distinction between the Hebrew people and other nations lay in their worship of the one true God, and this was the religion or faith to which they had to hold fast, and which it was to be their honour and glory to transmit, or hand on, to other nations. If they had relapsed into idolatry, they would not have been a distinct people any more; they would very soon have been lost amongst the tribes who surrounded them.

Of course, people are prone to follow the habits and customs they see around them; so it was really very difficult for the Israelites to keep from idolatry, as difficult as many other things have become to the Jews in these days.

But if we are not inclined to bow down and serve graven images, it does not follow that we have renounced idolatry, for do we not make idols to ourselves of other things?

I think many of us have made, or are in danger of making, an idol of money or of what it may bring us. Consider how hard and reckless we must become, if we

think of nothing but of growing richer and richer every year, if we only care for rich people, if we neglect all our plain and pressing duties for the purpose of getting more money. We may grow richer in money, but shall we not grow poorer in other things? Poorer in real friends, in simple happiness, in health, in all the joy that quiet and wholesome pursuits can bring us?

Can you tell me of any more idols that we are setting up in high places? There are many others.

First and foremost there is *self*. Only think how absorbing all our own interests, pursuits and pleasures *can* become to us; they *must*, of course, play a very large part in our lives, but they should leave us free to think of others, and not only to think, but to act for them. A really beautiful character *must* be an unselfish one; we must be prepared to give up. One of the most difficult things in life is this, as you all know, but still, if we wish to cast down the idol of self, it must be done. Are you preparing to do this?

Dear children, are you really learning to give up idolatry for the worship of what is holier and better? You may find it as difficult *now* as it *was* in the days of old to your forefathers, but still many of them succeeded in resisting the bad habits and customs of their neighbours, so may not you do the same?

"And if I said, 'I love Thee, Lord,'
He would not need my spoken word,
Because my daily life would tell
If verily I loved Him well."

## A PSALM OF LIFE.

TELL me not, in mournful numbers,
"Life is but an empty dream;"
For the soul is dead that slumbers,
And things are not what they seem.

Life is real! life is earnest!
And the grave is not its goal;
"Dust thou art, to dust returnest,"
Was not spoken of the soul.

Not enjoyment, and not sorrow,
Is our destined end or way:
But to act that each to-morrow
Find us farther than to-day.

Art is long, and time is fleeting,
And our hearts, tho' stout and brave,
Still, like muffled drums, are beating
Funeral marches to the grave.

In the world's broad field of battle,
In the bivouac of Life,
Be not like dumb driven cattle!
Be a hero in the strife!

Trust no future, howe'er pleasant!
Let the dead past bury its dead!
Act—act in the living present!
Heart within, and God o'erhead.

Lives of great men all remind us
We can make our lives sublime,
And, departing, leave behind us
Footprints on the sands of time.

Footprints that perhaps another,
Sailing o'er life's solemn main,
A forlorn and shipwrecked brother
Seeing, shall take heart again.

Let us, then, be up and doing,
With a heart for any fate;
Still achieving, still pursuing,
Learn to labour and to wait.

*Longfellow.*

## II.

DEAR CHILDREN,

THE Third Commandment runs thus:—

"Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord Thy God in vain; for the Lord will not hold him guiltless that taketh His name in vain."

If you remember, the First Commandment teaches us to believe in the existence of one God, Who is the great parent of the world, our ideal of perfect goodness and holiness, and the fountain of all our best and purest thoughts.

The Second Commandment tells us how we are to worship God, and the Third forbids us to use His holy name in any way that may be connected with an untruth.

The Rabbis of old relate, that this Third Commandment is one of the greatest importance, and that the whole world trembled when it was proclaimed.

There is also an old and beautiful tradition; that no Hebrew would ever step upon a shred of torn paper, for fear he might place his heel upon the name of the Almighty, and thus unknowingly commit an act of irreverence towards God.

Now this Third Commandment is specially directed against using God's name for unworthy purposes—hence against irreverence.

Taking the Lord's name in vain means swearing falsely, or in other words committing perjury.

It means using the holiest name that exists, in order

to prove that a lie is not a lie, and by calling God Himself as witness to the truth of what we know is absolutely false.

Clearly, those who commit perjury must be dead to all sense of honour, and deaf to the voice of conscience. We can hardly credit that the perjurer believes in the existence of a God, for were he to believe in what is the very essence of truth—God Himself—how could he attest a falsehood in God's holy name?

Let no cowardice on your part, no fear of men or love of approbation, no offer of gain, nor shame of the world's opinion ever tempt you to swear falsely. Better stand confessing the truth, however bad it may be, than shelter yourself behind a false oath.

God's name is a very holy one; it should not fall lightly from our lips at any time; it should be spoken with reverence and love, as we pronounce the name of our father and mother.

We should not use that name as an exclamation, or as a word to which no importance need be attached.

In fact, we should not swear at all, for as Ebu Ezra says: "He who has once accustomed himself to use superfluous oaths, swears in one day to an infinite amount, and that habit at last becomes so familiar to him that he scarcely knows that he swears, and if you reproachfully ask him why he swore just now, he will swear that he has not sworn; so great is the power of the habit; and at last his almost every assertion will be preceded by an oath."

The Arabs, who were so closely connected with the Hebrews for many years, had a proverb which contained these words: "Never swear, but let thy words be yes or no." Oaths, used as, alas! we so frequently hear them, make speech hideous; and think what a beautiful thing the gift of language is!

Think what we can express in words; content, admiration, love, joy, all that is holiest and best. We can make the heart glad by words of kindness; we can comfort the sorrowful by words of pity; we can raise up the broken-hearted by words of hope. We try to put our best thoughts into words; we make our sweetest songs by adding words to music; we speak to God Himself in words of repentance and prayer.

And those who are careless in speech soon grow careless in action, for the two things are very closely united, and carelessness of action means that we cease to care about striving to attain towards the highest ideal of what is holiest and purest, but are content with a very easy-going standard and pattern for our daily life.

The Commandment says: "that God will not hold him guiltless who taketh His name in vain." That means that God Himself will punish the perjurer who perhaps may never be found out by man, for a false oath is not like a theft or murder; it is less easily discovered, it may be hidden away for ages in man's own heart. But God will in His own time send His own punishment. Possibly, the voice of conscience, stifled when that false oath was made, may awaken later on and grow troublesomely loud and active, bringing its owner to a burning sense of the wrong he has done when it is too late to undo the consequences of one false word; or, may be, the voice of conscience, silenced for good and all, allows the perjurer to become more and more entangled in falsehood, until he cannot escape from the meshes of the net he has woven, and stands branded with deceit before his fellow-men.

At all events, my children, God will not hold him guiltless who takes His name in vain.

"Father! To thy kind love we owe
All that is fair and good below;
Bestower of the health that lies
On tearless cheeks and cheerful eyes.

Giver of sunshine and of rain,
Ripener of fruits on hill and plain;
Fountain of light, that rayed afar,
Fills the vast urns of sun and star.

Yet deem we not that thus alone
Thy mercy and thy love are shown;
For we have learned, with higher praise
And holier ways to speak thy ways.

In woe's dark hour our kindest stay
Sole trust when life shall pass away;
Teacher of hopes that light the gloom
Of death, and consecrate the tomb.

Patient with headstrong guilt to bear,
Slow to avenge and kind to spare;
Listening to prayer, and reconciled
Full quickly to thy erring child."—*Bryant.*

## III.

DEAR CHILDREN,

I AM going to talk to you about the Fourth Commandment.

"Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy."

The Sabbath was given to us:

(1) For the worship of God.

(2) For our own recreation.

It is all summed up in these two words, worship and recreation, and we will begin by the latter, because, if we understand that word properly, it will help us to know what the proper worship of God means.

Re-creation of body, mind, and soul.

You all know how tired we get of any one kind of work, or of play too, for that matter; we should be very poor creatures unless we could occasionally change our work or occupation.

Perhaps if we had been left to ourselves, we should not have given this a thought, and we should have arranged nothing but week-days; but I do not think we should have led very healthy or useful lives, for, if we want to be useful, we must not neglect our health.

Therefore are we given this one day of rest, master and servant, mistress and maid, teacher and pupil, factory girl and shop boy—even the poor beasts are not to be forgotten, and I am sure they want this day of rest quite as much if not more, than we do.

For, you see our tired bodies need building up again

or re-creating. Now, how is this to be done? Not by rest alone, but by change of occupation.

In the same way, the poor hard-worked brain that has been puzzling day after day over long columns of figures, or difficult desk work, or perplexing business of any kind, must also have its re-creation.

If it were not for the seventh day of rest, how muddled and distraught that poor brain would become, and I am sure that the worker's temper would suffer as well.

There are some people who think their laws wiser than God's laws, and who cannot bear to put their work by even for one day, until at last the work puts them on one side, for the brain refuses to do it, and nature calls out very loudly for *rest and change.*

It would have been better to have taken it in God's appointed time, would it not?

There are others who grudge taking a Sabbath's rest, not from their work, but from their play, until it ceases to be play, and becomes work of the dullest description.

Work and play would both be brighter and happier if God's laws were more closely obeyed.

And now let us see how the spirit can be refreshed and re-created—the spirit that is of God Himself, the link between the Maker and His creatures.

Dear children, the spirit can slumber pretty soundly, when body and mind are both at work, and the re-creation of the spirit means its awakening and not its rest. This is very hard for you to understand, I know. Perhaps you have not thought much about it, nor reflected that men and women can be toiling with their poor bodies, and working with their weary brain, whilst the spiritual life is at its very lowest ebb.

And now tell me, how do we awaken the spirit? How

do we rouse it, so as to hear the voice of God in our hearts?

We must bring it into *communion* or touch with God Himself.

The child cries, the mother hears the cry, she takes the child in her arms, and answers it.

So must our cry go up, until God hears us, and answers us.

Fervent, heart-felt, sincere prayer will bring us into touch with God.

"I waited patiently for the Lord, and He inclined unto me, and heard my cry."

"Unto Thee will I cry, O Lord, my rock; be not silent to me: hear the voice of my supplication when I cry unto Thee."

"Hear my prayer, O God; give ear to the words of my mouth. Hear my cry, O God, attend unto my prayer."

"O Thou that hearest prayer, unto Thee shall all flesh come."

The Bible is full of such prayer, and of the answering voice of God.

The re-creation of the spirit is thus inseparably connected with the worship of God; for worship consists of prayer and praise.

Part of the seventh day, the Sabbath, should therefore be consecrated to communion with God, or as it is generally called: Divine worship.

In a quiet and solemn building, filled with devout and reverent worshippers, our spirit should receive its Sabbath of recreation.

Noble words, set to fine music, cheer and refresh the spirit in a way that nothing else can do.

Having talked to you so far, about the re-creation of

yourself, body, mind, and soul, you must see how the true carrying out of that one word re-creation leads to the proper *worship of God.*

This Fourth Commandment is a difficult one to observe rightly for various reasons. Let us think of some of them.

(1) We are living, not in a Jewish, but in a Christian country, under Christian laws, where, of course, the habits and customs of the people are made for the convenience of a Christian community. Thus, on Sunday—the Christian Sabbath, the whole country takes its rest; we are surrounded by what I may call a Sabbath atmosphere—Business is suspended, shops are shut, places of amusement are closed, and the houses of worship stand open for those who like to enter, with iron tongues proclaiming what day it is "from dewy morn to dusky eve."

But our people have to take their rest amidst the work and amusement of those around them; it is as if we were trying to read a solemn book in front of the Royal Exchange at mid-day; you know how difficult that would be! The rich or the idle are enticed by amusements of every sort, and the poor by necessity—for they are constantly constrained to spend their Sabbath day in completing the work of the week, thus disregarding God's laws.

Better would it be for both if they could take their pleasure and their work on another day. For you know the old rhyme, that says, justly enough:

> "A Sabbath well spent
> Brings a week of content."

Now we come to another difficulty.

As I said before, we are told not to work on the seventh day, but to *rest.*

Well, this word has many interpretations. What might be rest to one would be only unutterable tedium to another.

For remember we do not merely ask for repose, such as a night's rest gives us, but the rest of *recreation.*

An old person would take his recreation in sitting still, a young one would want—well, children, you can answer this question?

A walk, change of scene, a game, even a little work about the house would not come amiss—anything might be better than sitting in an armchair, with your hands folded before you. Do not let us think for one moment that innocent recreation, which is not giving work to other, whose Sabbath it may be, can be wrong,[1] and do not let us all insist upon spelling Rest in one way.

For remember that if we feel very much bored with ourselves, and all the world besides, we shall not be obeying God's laws.

True *re-creation*, as I have said over and over again, implies change of *occupation*, and I must insist that, without true recreation, we cannot keep the Sabbath properly.

Let us think of some of the means we may use for change and recreation on the Sabbath day.

(1) Reading.
(2) Listening to music.
(3) Looking at pictures and works of art.

[1] There is a very eminent statesman who has two tables in his study; one is his work, the other his play-table. All his books on history and politics (which mean the history of the present day) are on the one table—the table of work and of the week; whilst on the other are books of poetry, very old poetry written in the Greek language, which he turns to when he wants to take his rest and recreation.

(4) Congenial talk.

An innocent game of play.

If possible, a walk into the country, learning something about flowers, plants, and animals.

We have been only thinking of ourselves hitherto, but what does our Commandment say:

"Six days shalt thou labour, and do all thy work: but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord thy God, in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy man-servant, nor thy maid-servant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gate."

Jews are very kind to their Jewish servants, and give them as much rest and recreation as possible, and I trust they are equally kind and considerate to their Christian servants. For remember that they, too, have a Sabbath-day, although it is not our seventh day, and they, too, want refreshment for body, mind, and spirit.

Dear young Jewish girls, when you grow up, if you should ever have a little Christian maid, let her rest from work on her Sunday, or if you should be fellow-servant with a Christian girl, do her share of work on her Sabbath, as she may very probably do yours on your Sabbath.

Remember the stranger within thy gate. God's laws were not only made for His own people but also for the stranger.

And do not think that you can be pleasing God by neglecting to do your duty, or refusing to do an act of kindness on the Sabbath day. Do not give up nursing a sick friend, or helping an over-worked Christian servant, or taking your turn in any duty which cannot be left for another day. The mere keeping to the letter of the law is not enough, waken your spirit, so that you hear God's voice through the letter, telling you what you should do when you are in doubt.

Now, we will not close this little talk about the Sabbath without giving a thought to the poor animals.

Their recreation must mean bodily rest.

Let them have it, whenever they can.

In this Christian country most people try to give their horses a rest on Sunday; let us respect their feelings, and not be always grumbling at the want of cabs on that day, nor at the difficulty of getting about.

Dear children, remember that much play for us may mean a great deal more work for others, and should we not be considerate of those others, even when they are only the poor, weary, patient horses, who for one day in the week ought to be allowed to stand without their harness?

And, let us make the seventh day holy and consecrate it to God by thinking some good thought, by saying some cheering word, or by doing some kind action on that day.

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"Hushed was the evening hymn,
The temple courts were dark,
The lamp was burning dim
Before the sacred Ark;
When suddenly a voice Divine
Rang through the silence of the shrine.

The old man meek and mild,
The priest of Israel, slept;
His watch the Temple-child,
The little Levite, kept;
And what from Eli's sense was sealed,
The Lord to Hannah's son revealed,

Oh, give me Samuel's ear
The open ear, O Lord!
Alive and quick to hear
Each whisper of Thy word.
Like him, to answer at Thy call,
And to obey Thee, first of all.

Oh, give me Samuel's heart!
A lowly heart that waits
Where in Thy house Thou art,
Or watches at Thy gates
By day and night, a heart that still
Moves at the breathing of Thy will.

Oh, give me Samuel's mind,
A sweet unmurmuring faith,
Obedient and resigned
To Thee in life and death,
That I may read with childlike eyes
Truths that are hidden from the wise."

*J. D. Burns.*

## IV.

DEAR CHILDREN,

TO-DAY we are going to have a talk about the Fifth Commandment:

"Honour thy father and thy mother; that thy days may be long upon the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee."

Do you remember my telling you that this Commandment comes midway between those relating to God and those which concern our fellow-creatures? pointing out as it were the position in which parents stand to their children?

God Himself is called our Father in the writings of the Bible,—His love and tenderness towards us being compared to a father's love and tenderness for his children.

Let us turn to our Bible and look in the Book of Psalms: that beautiful collection of hymns and songs which will, I hope, one day be very familiar to you. Let us find Psalm 68; there we shall see in the fifth verse:

"A father of the fatherless is God in his holy habitation."

And in Psalm 103: "Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him."

Now let us turn to a chapter in the Book of the Prophet Jeremiah. It is the thirty-first chapter and the ninth verse, and there we shall find: "I (God is speaking) am a father to Israel, and Ephraim is my first-born," and again in Malachi, the last book of the Bible, these words occur:

"A son honoureth his father, and a servant his master: if then I be a father, where is mine honour—saith the Lord of Hosts."

For His people, the children of Israel, were disregarding His commandments. Again, in the same book:

"Have we not all one father?"

"Hath not God created us?"

I am telling you these verses, dear children, sending you back to the Bible for them, so that you should see that God Himself did not disdain being called by the name of Father, one of the grandest and most beautiful names that human tongue can shape.

A great American preacher, a very good and deeply religious man, spoke of God as "Father and Mother of the Universe," feeling that all the tender and loving qualities which endear mothers to their children must exist in the all-embracing love of God, so that in praying to God, he must think of Him as Father and Mother combined.

Let us think a little of what parents, good parents, are to their children.

They are the first human beings the little child sees and knows—the mother especially, for it is she who watches and cares for her helpless baby; there are times when it is never out of her arms, and if she leaves it for a moment, its cry soon fetches her back.

Then comes the first step, when the baby tries to stand alone; its mother must be there to steady it when it totters, to guide the little feet across the room, to take it lovingly in her arms if it falls, to soothe it when it cries, and to encourage it when it makes good progress.

Baby, dear children, is a terrible tyrant, and its throne is its mother's lap. Then comes the child's education, its first lesson is its parents' work; they are preparing

the little scholar for school. Oh! how sad it is when those baby lips learn naughty vicious words from wicked companions, which words must be unlearnt as soon as possible. The home lessons are very precious.

Dear children, do not neglect them, and honour those teachers given you by God Himself.

For parents teach their children to love and know God, and to follow his Commandments; they are not only helping their children in this life, but preparing them for a life to come; they are the first ministers of religion that a child knows. The mother teaches it to pray, to listen to the voice of conscience, to take pleasure in reading God's word, to commune with God Himself, and the earthly father should be leading his children to their heavenly Father. In olden times, the father of the family was also the priest, he built the altar, and offered up the sacrifice, as in these days he presides over the family worship on Sabbaths and festivals.

If a child has good and loving parents, how much more easily he will be led to follow God's Commandments, which seem to be the written wishes of these parents.

Of course you love your parents; you cannot help it, what an unnatural child you would be if you failed in affection towards them!

For think what a parent's, what a mother's, love is!

There is nothing on this earth like it, no love can compare with it, for it is utterly unselfish and self-denying; it gives everything and asks for nothing in return. You, that have good mothers spared to you, should thank God every night and morning most devoutly and most reverently for that blessing; do not neglect their lightest word, their faintest wish, or the day may come when all the tears you can shed will not wash away your misery at having ever disobeyed their word.

If there are any poor children amongst you here, who have never known a father nor a mother's love, or, having known it, remember it now only as a thing of the distant past, then think of all that is purest, tenderest, deepest, most unselfish, and picture to yourselves what you have lost, and what God, our merciful Father, will give you in Heaven, for it could not be Heaven without our good and loving parents.

There are many boys and girls, too, who want to be quite grown-up and grand. They endeavour to prove their independence by speaking disrespectfully of their parents, by carefully trying to keep out of their company, by never showing them the slightest attention; do they know that in doing this, they are breaking God's law, and not only making themselves most offensive, but actually committing a sin!

For they are trying to dishonour, instead of honouring, father and mother, are they not?

There is a book in the Bible called a Book of Proverbs; it is full of very wise sayings, some of which we should do well to learn by heart, so as to have them ready at a moment's notice.

Listen, my children: "A wise son maketh a glad father; but a foolish son is the heaviness of his mother." And again:

"Hearken to thy father—and despise not thy mother when she is old." And this one:

"Children's children are the crown of old men, and the glory of children are their fathers."

And again, comparing, as I said before, God Himself to a father:

"My son despise not the chastening of the Lord; neither be weary of his correction—

"For whom the Lord loveth he correcteth, even as a father the son in whom he delighteth."

Now tell me, children, how can you best honour your parents?

By giving them your complete trust, your ready obedience, and your devoted affection.

Parents want to see their children attractive in person, intelligent in mind, and faithful to God's laws in all their actions; they want them to grow into useful and happy men and women, for who can be happy who is not useful? And by striving to be good and useful you are honouring your parents.

Children, you can honour your parents by being truthful, honest, upright, obedient, unselfish, and God-fearing.

By honouring your parents you will be laying in store many a quality, which will stand you in good stead when you are grown men and women.

In the Bible, children are called an heritage of the Lord, they are as arrows in the hand of a mighty man, and the man is called happy who has a quiver full of them.

But alas! many are the unhappy parents who have wicked and ungrateful children—children who bring dishonour on their grey hair and make their old age desolate.

We cannot bear to dwell on the sorrow which such children must cause their parents, but rather on the loving son and tender daughter, whose greatest joy in life is to return in some measure to their parents all the care and affection that have been so lavishly bestowed upon them in their childhood and youth.

## SPEAK GENTLY.

SPEAK gently,—it is better far
To rule by love than fear;
Speak gently,—let no harsh word mar
The good we may do here.

Speak gently to the young,—for they
Will have enough to bear;
Pass through this life as best they may,
'Tis full of anxious care.

Speak gently to the aged one,
Grieve not the careworn heart;
The sands of life are nearly run,
Let them in peace depart.

Speak gently to the erring ones;
They must have toiled in vain;
Perchance unkindness made them so,
O, win them back again.

Speak gently,—'tis a little thing,
Dropped in the heart's deep well;
The good, the joy that it may bring,
Eternity shall tell.—*Anonymous.*

## V.

DEAR CHILDREN,

WE have now to consider the Sixth Commandment—"Thou shalt not kill."

It will probably strike you that such a Commandment is hardly required for children, or young people like yourselves, who can have no inducement or temptation to take the life of a fellow-creature.

It can only be intended for quite grown-up people, who must be so different to yourselves.

A murderer!

How impossible for you to understand, or even to guess at the nature of such a monster. Surely his face would betray his uncontrollable passions, so that you might quickly run away from him, were he ever to cross your path!

That is an idea of your own. A murderer, even one of the most brutal, must once have been an innocent child.

He may not have been so very different to you, for you all have one thing in common with him, and that is —human nature.

His young life may have passed, happily enough, alternately between work and play; he may possibly have had good parents, and a respectable home, and, perhaps, when he stood up to repeat the Sixth Commandment—"Thou shalt not kill"—he may have smiled in the strength of his innocence, and have thought to himself: "These words can never apply to me."

No, the murderer does not necessarily begin life like a wild beast and a monster, a creature set apart to be shunned.

There lived in the time of Cromwell a writer of religious books, Richard Baxter, by name.

One day, when he was walking with a companion through the streets of his native town, he was met by a dreary procession—a man being led by his gaolers to the gallows. Baxter looked earnestly at the prisoner, exclaiming to his companion: "If it were not for the grace of God, there goes Richard Baxter."

We might all say the same; if it were not for God's help and protecting arm, if it were not for the good teaching we are given by our parents and teachers, if it were not for happy home influences, might we not fall into temptation, and end by a disgraceful death?

Not one of us can stand up and say: "I am perfectly safe from sin."

For murder itself, the act of taking another life, is hardly ever premeditated; it is the outcome of some very fierce passion which has not been kept under control. And such passions we may all have.

Now let us turn to our Bibles, from which we can take so many lessons if only we know how to look for them, and there, in the fourth chapter of Genesis, we shall find the story of Cain and Abel.

Two brothers, both sacrificing to God; the elder, Cain, the tiller of the ground, placed the first-fruits of the earth on the altar; the younger, Abel, the shepherd, slew and sacrificed one of the lambs of his flock.

God read the hearts of the two brothers, and He accepted one offering, and not the other. That is to say, fire from Heaven fell and consumed the lamb, leaving the first-fruits untouched.

Cain was very wroth and his countenance fell; his anger was aroused.

The Lord spake unto him: "Why art thou wroth, and why is thy countenance fallen? If thou doest well, shalt thou not be accepted? and if thou doest not well sin lieth at the door."

Cain, therefore, had been justly punished, and he was warned in time, so that he might in future do well, and deserve God's favour.

The opportunity was given to him, but he did not take it.

He allowed himself to be mastered by two passions; can you tell me what they were?

(1) Anger at being reproved by God.

(2) Jealousy of his brother Abel.

These passions are by no means uncommon; we may all have the germs of anger and jealousy in our hearts, and if we do not control them, they may one day be our masters.

Mad with rage, Cain raised his hand against his brother and slew him. In that one moment he became a *murderer*—that fatal action drove him out like a vagabond, and called down the curse of God upon his own miserable life.

The story of that one murder is the story of many others.

Give way to a momentary fit of hatred, jealousy or anger, and the innocent hand may become a blood-stained one.

Cain, as the Bible story tells us, did not conquer his evil passions, and so he fell; unable to bear the first word of reproof, he had to suffer the entire wrath of God.

Children, learn to conquer yourselves, learn whilst

you are young, for our passions grow with our growth, and strengthen with our strength.

Passion, when unrestrained, disturbs the features, makes harsh the voice, degrades the language, and may even endanger the life of a fellow-creature.

You sometimes hear people say: "I do not mind a passionate child; anything better than a sulky one."

This is a very silly observation; it does not follow that because one thing is bad, another bad thing should be better.

Avoid sulking, by all means, but curb your violent passions as well. Sulkiness may make you a very disagreeable companion, but it will not do what a violent passion does. A passionate, hot-tempered child may become a cruel murderer; a man who gives way to fits of anger may drive his wife to self-destruction; a hasty father may make hypocrites and liars of his children.

Conquer your passions, bridle your tongue, try to be victorious over self. Each time you succeed in that battle, you will have gained a great step, and the next one will be comparatively easy.

Is that not the case? If it be difficult to conquer self, it is, for many, equally difficult to resist temptation.

What can this have to do with our Sixth Commandment? Why, a great deal.

Many an innocent boy or girl has been led into evil ways by bad companions. There is one word which it is so difficult to say, and a short one too.

What is it?

NO.

That is the word you must learn to say.

It must be a very decided *No*—it must not sound at all like *Yes* or *Perhaps*, but must be a good honest *No*.

Promise me that you will learn to say that word.

Pray to God to help you ; ask Him to make you very strong and able to resist the temptations that bad companions might hold out to you.

Do you know that it may take but a very short time to forget your good training, to become discontented with your life, disobedient to your parents, deceitful and untruthful ?

In the first chapter of the Book of Proverbs, there are these few verses which you should learn by heart :

" My son, if sinners entice thee, consent thou not. If they say, Come with us . . . cast in thy lot with us, let us all have one purse . . . walk not thou in the way with them, refrain thy foot from their path, for their feet run to evil, and make haste to shed blood."

Many a poor lad has been taken by evil and reckless companions into the low gambling-house or drinking-rooms ; many a bright and respectable girl, unknown to her careful mother, has been tempted into the common music-hall. How they must both have disliked this first step, but how soon their feelings have become blunted, until, at last, they are unable to exist without their exciting and unwholesome amusement !

The chaplain of a Metropolitan gaol was told one morning by the governor that a prisoner had just been brought in who was to be tried for murder.

The chaplain went to the cell and stood aghast ; a mere boy was before him.

" This must be a mistake, my poor lad, what can have sent you here ? "

" Indeed, Sir, I do not know," answered the prisoner, looking up with dazed eyes ; " they tell me I have taken another boy's life, but I remember nothing of it."

That poor boy, in a fit of drunken rage, had turned

upon one of the companions who had led him to his ruin, and had murdered him.

The blood was on his head, but was the guilt on his soul alone?

In his drunken rage he knew nothing of what he was doing, and when he recovered consciousness his terrible action stood before him, cursing him as God had cursed Cain.

Children, repeat the Sixth Commandment over again; it is for you, and for me, and for all of us; do not let us think murder in our hearts, do not let our evil passions be our masters.

Let us pray for strength to overcome evil, and to resist temptation; let our prayer be like the Psalmist's: "Cast us not out from Thy presence (as Cain was cast out) and take not Thy Holy Spirit from us."

MY DEAR CHILDREN,

THE Seventh Commandment is one which only concerns those who have arrived at man's and woman's estate; therefore, we need not dwell upon it to-day, beyond saying that the more modesty and self-restraint are cultivated in early youth, the less danger will there be in later years of this Commandment being broken.

## ONE BY ONE.

ONE by one the sands are flowing,
One by one the moments fall;
Some are coming, some are going,
Do not strive to grasp them all.

One by one thy duties want thee,
Let thy whole strength go to each;
Let no future dreams elate thee,
Learn thou first what these can teach.

One by one, bright gifts from heaven,
Joys are sent thee here below;
Take them readily when given,
Ready, too, to let them go.

One by one thy griefs shall meet thee,
Do not fear an armed band;
One will fade as others reach thee,
Shadows passing through the land.

Do not look at life's long sorrow,
See how small each moment's pain;
God will help thee for to-morrow,
Every day begin again.

Every hour that fleets so slowly
Has its task to do or bear;
Luminous the crown and holy,
If thou set each gem with care.

Do not linger with regretting,
Or for passing hours despond;
Nor the daily toil forgetting,
Look too eagerly beyond.

Hours are golden links, God's token
Reaching heaven; but one by one,
Take them, lest the chain be broken,
Ere the pilgrimage be done.

*Adelaide A. Procter.*

## VI.

DEAR CHILDREN,

LET us have a talk about the Eighth Commandment: "Thou shalt not steal."

You know how careful we are to teach our little children in their nurseries, that they are never to take a cake from the table behind their mother's or nurse's back, and when the child outgrows its nursery and becomes a school-boy or girl, then again the lesson is repeated, and the child who steals a pencil or a marble from his playmate would be called a thief.

It is most important that children should be taught to obey the Eighth Commandment from their very earliest days; many poor children never receive this teaching, for they do not all possess that great blessing, good and honest parents.

A dishonest father will not take the trouble to bring his child up to be an honest man; he may even wish him to become a thief, for we know how many poor unfortunate children are taught to lie, steal and cheat from their earliest years. There are many different kinds of thieves, as there are many different motives for stealing, not reasons, there can be no reason for wrong-doing, but motives there may be, or rather circumstances which lead to the evil action.

First there is the burglar or house-breaker. The man who breaks into our house at night, and carries off the money out of our box, or any of our little treasures. He is generally in league with a companion, who watches

outside, and gives notice if the police are coming. The man wears soft shoes, so that he can move noiselessly, and he uses false keys with which he can unpick almost any lock; he carries a dark lantern that will just give him enough light for his evil work, besides all sorts of instruments for cutting through doors and shutters, and for opening bolts and bars. He comes to steal our things in the dead of night; sometimes he brings a poor child with him, small enough to climb through a narrow window, quick enough to help him in picking up the booty.

If he be successful, he makes off with his ill-gotten goods, joins his companion in the street, and hurries to the nearest shop where stolen things are received and bought. The shopman is also a thief, although not a burglar, for he is taking that which another man has no right to bring him.

But the burglar may be discovered before he can escape, perchance by the police (those excellent friends of honest people), or by the frightened inhabitants of the house. Then in trying to defend himself, reckless and desperate as he generally is, he may be led to commit *murder*. If he should fall into the hands of the police, he knows too well that sentence of death or penal servitude for life will be passed upon him.

The companion watching for him in the street is a thief, so is the receiver of stolen goods, so is the woman who uses her delicate fingers to unpick the tell-tale initials in stolen linen, so is the pick-pocket who frequents crowded streets and places where people assemble for amusement or business.

In many of our large railway stations we read warning in big letters: Beware of pick-pockets.[1] There are thieves

[1] There is a story, and a true story too, of a good clergyman

who steal in what they might call a refined and gentlemanlike manner; they would not break into a house or commit a murder, but they would abstract small sums from their master's till, or alter figures in an account book, and, if very clever with their pen, they would even try and copy their master's name, which we call forging.

Let us now think of some of the motives that may make an honest man become a thief.

(1) There is idleness.

An idle boy who will not take kindly to his work must do something for his livelihood, and stealing may seem easier and at the first going off far more amusing than working. It brings him into such gay company, with boys and men who spend their time in a continual round of excitement!

The amusements themselves are often of a very expensive character, and the young thief, boy or girl, man or woman, is led on step by step, until he or she is unable

who used to go regularly once or twice a week to teach a roomful of young thieves. I wonder what they thought of the Eighth Commandment!

They were very quiet and attentive scholars, but one evening the clergyman was astonished to find a very small class, and asked where the absent pupils could be. "Out on business, sir," was the answer, and the clergyman did not dare to pursue the subject. He hoped that he could in time induce them to take to other and more honest business by showing them that, after all, honesty is the best policy, and that the wisest thing is to keep God's law.

During a great mission week in London, when sermons were being preached daily in the largest churches in the metropolis, a clergyman thought well to inform his congregation that a number of pickpockets were scattered about the building. One of the ladies present whispered to her companion: "I am so glad, for what they will hear to-day may do them good." Let us hope it did.

to return to an honest calling. We must have the habit of work, to be able to work conscientiously.

(2.) Then there is the love of ostentation, of wishing to appear richer in worldly goods than we are; because our friend and neighbour has risen in the world and has a fine house, we must have one also, we must dress as smartly, and receive as much company, and do all things as he does.

But how can we make both ends meet? Ah, there is the difficulty! it is perhaps not possible by honest means. And so we are really going to be dishonest, no better than the common thief or pickpocket.

(3.) Then there is the man who professes to sell that which is not the genuine article: the dishonest tradesman who adulterates his goods, puts alum into the bread, water into the milk, sand into the sugar—who sells bad meat for good.

The man who scamps work and sells an imperfect article for a perfect one; the tailor, with his badly sewn garments; the shoemaker, with his carelessly stitched shoes. As they do not sell us our money's worth, or what they profess to sell, they, or their workmen, are in reality guilty of theft.

It constantly happens that a master employer has to keep an overseer to watch his workmen, and to pay him the money which might go towards more work. And sometimes the overseer himself is a dishonest man, who takes the money and lets his master be cheated as well.

England would be a richer country if there were less dishonesty. For, disgusted with our own bad goods, we often buy foreign articles, which are better as well as cheaper than our own. So that our money goes abroad into the pockets of the foreigner, and our English people are thrown out of employment.

Builders, carpenters, painters—in fact, men of all trades seem bitten with this strange disease of dishonesty. We are constantly hearing of ill-built houses which let in the damp, of doors and windows that do not close properly, and of paint that hardly dries before it drops off in flakes. For this form of dishonesty we have to pay with our health, sometimes with our lives. If there are any boys or girls present who mean to go out as apprentices, let me beg of them to do their work *honestly;* do not let your companions teach you to cheat. If you do you will be helping on that great army of Ruin that is daily making England poorer than she need be, and the poor will and must suffer first.

And you who are going to be maid-servants, and who may one day have a certain control over your master's possessions, remember that you will be guilty of stealing if you permit waste in the household, if you buy unnecessary goods at his expense, or if you allow his things to be spoilt through neglect or carelessness. The master may be a very busy man, far too busy to look into the details of every-day life; he trusts his servants, as we all wish to do.

The servant is not a thief; how angry she would be if such a frightful name were suggested! She would give warning immediately; ay! but she is a thief if she betrays her master's trust in anything, if she squanders and wastes his property, and if she misuses the power that is placed in her hands.

Do you remember the story of Gehazi in the Bible, who took as a present that which he had no right to receive? In fact, it was a form of stealing.

The servant of the great prophet Elisha—Gehazi, was not proof against the temptation of dishonesty. First he was untruthful, and next he was dishonest, which

indeed is constantly the case. It is impossible to be transparently truthful in speech and dishonest in practice.

Unless our lives be true ones, they are worth very little.

There is another motive for theft, and alas! a very common one in these days. An amusement, considered very attractive by many of our young men, and grown of late years very fashionable, has led unfortunately to every shape of dishonesty.

I mean gambling and betting.

Most great thefts are the result of money losses through gambling. Let me entreat all the boys here present to have nothing whatsoever to do with the taking or making of bets. Avoid betting men, betting language, betting houses. Avoid, in the words of a great writer, making your gains out of others' losses.

You cannot consort with them without danger; the life they would tempt you to lead would in all probability mean breaking the Eighth Commandment.

We are warned against the sin of stealing not only in the Ten Commandments, but in many other passages in the Bible where mention is made of this particular offence.

Let us look them out.

In the 19th chapter of Leviticus, which contains a repetition of many laws given by Moses to the children of Israel, we find in the eleventh verse:

"Ye shall not steal, neither deal falsely, neither lie one to another."

Observe that in this verse stealing is placed in close connection with false dealing and untruthfulness.

Listen to Jeremiah in the 9th verse of the 7th chapter: "Will ye steal, murder and swear falsely?"

Again is stealing placed, not only in connection with

false swearing, but also with the fact of committing murder.

The prophet Zechariah, describing all that he sees in a vision, exclaims: "This is the curse that goeth forth over the face of the whole earth; for everyone that stealeth shall be cut off, and every one that sweareth shall be cut off, and it shall enter into the house of the thief, and into the house of him that sweareth falsely to my name and it shall remain in the midst of his house, and shall consume it with the timber and the stones thereof." 5th chapter, 3rd verse.

Now listen to the prophet Hosea:

"Hear the word of the Lord, for the Lord hath a controversy with the inhabitants of the land, because there no truth, no mercy, no knowledge of God. By swearing, and lying, and killing, and stealing, they break out—blood toucheth blood. Therefore shall the land mourn." Hosea, 4th chapter, 2nd verse.

It is inevitable that stealing should draw other sins in its train; when the Eighth Commandment is broken, then the Sixth and Ninth will also be violated.

Of this we have ample proof in Bible history, and in our own every-day life; think of this, children, not only if you should ever be tempted to take that which does not belong to you, but still more should you feel inclined to lead a life which conduces to dissipated extravagant habits, expensive pleasures, and unworthy companionship.

## HEROES.

THE heroes are not all six foot tall,
Large souls may dwell in bodies small
The heart that will melt in sympathy
For the poor and the weak where'er it be,
Is a thing of beauty, whether it shine
In a man of forty or lad of nine.

"*Scattered Seed.*"

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"Lie not; but let thy heart be true to God,
Thy mouth to it, thy actions to them both:
Cowards tell lies, and those that fear the rod:
The stormy working soul spits lies and froth.
Dare to be true. Nothing can need a ly:
A fault, which needs it most, grows two thereby.

Flie idlenesse, which yet thou canst not flie
By dressing, mistressing and complement.
If those take up thy day, the sunne will crie
Against thee, for his light was only lent.
God gave thy soul brave wings; put not those feathers
Into a bed and sleep out all ill weathers.

By all means use sometimes to be alone.
Salute thyself: see what thy soul doth wear.
Dare to look in the chest; for 'tis thine own:
And tumble up and down what thou find'st there.
Who cannot rest till he good fellows finde,
He breaks up house, burns out of doors his mind."

*G. Herbert.*

## VII.

DEAR CHILDREN,

LET me hear the Ninth Commandment: "Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour."

Can you explain to me what that means? First, let us think of the word "neighbour."

If we make use of that term in these days it is to designate some one living in the same street as ourselves, or in the next house, but in the old Bible days neighbour was a much more general term.

It included relations, friends, acquaintances, even the stranger within the gate. For we are expressly told in the 19th chapter of Leviticus: "The stranger that dwelleth with you, shall be unto you as one born among you, and thou shalt love him as thyself."

Now, let us see how the Bible speaks of our duties towards our neighbours. Again turning to that same chapter of Leviticus we find: "Thou shalt not defraud thy neighbour, neither rob him . . . in righteousness shalt thou judge thy neighbour. Thou shalt not hate thy brother in thy heart; thou shalt in nowise rebuke thy neighbour, and not suffer sin upon him . . . but thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself."

We are also told: "Devise not evil against thy neighbour." "Be not a witness against thy neighbour without good cause."

Now the Ninth Commandment is directed against this very form of doing our neighbour harm—this bearing of

false witness in a court of law, accusing him unjustly, bringing down a punishment upon him which he does not deserve.

You will remember that the Bible says: "Lying lips are an abomination to the Lord."

The lying lips which are directed against our neighbour are doubly an abomination. For not only does that imply the telling of a falsehood, but also the deliberate intention of harming our neighbour.

We may be driven to such sin by jealousy, envy, hatred, cowardice, or by the fear of being found out, and the desire to shelter ourselves behind others.

We may tell one falsehood, and then, unable to go back, give our false witness as the next step downwards.

Boys and girls, be not afraid of telling the truth! Shrink from your first lie as from a terrible disease, for moral cowardice is at the root of many a sin; it may drive you to break this Ninth Commandment, as it may lead you to break others.

And should you, under stress of circumstances, be hurried or frightened into one lie, then boldly come forward, as the occasion arises, and say: "I told a falsehood yesterday to save myself, but to-day I will *dare* to tell the *truth*."

It has been well said, that every lie, quite apart from its baneful consequences, is a base crime—an offence against the nobleness of our own soul, because it is treason against truth.

But, when this lie takes the shape of false witness, and is spoken before a jury of men who are trying to sift truth from falsehood, before a judge who is prepared to pass sentence upon the accused, before the friends and relations of the prisoner, before the world at large

in the shape of the press, then it becomes a living thing, and passes beyond our control.

It may then falsify justice, protect the criminal, condemn the innocent, and shatter our human belief in the justice of God.

"A man," says the author of Proverbs, "that beareth false witness against his neighbour is a hammer and a sword and a sharp arrow."

Let him beware that the shaft of the arrow fly not back and pierce his own heart.

There is yet another way of bearing false witness, and that is by keeping silence, when a word from our lips would proclaim the truth.

Silence can be the cloak of deceit, even as speech can be its arrow. Here, again, we must call upon moral courage to come forward and help us to speak the truth.

Boys and girls, pray that you may be brave in word as well as deed, and help one another to be so!

If you learn to speak the truth when you are very young, it will soon become your second nature, and you will never stoop to a falsehood. Girls are said to be more untruthful than boys, possibly because they are naturally of a more shrinking disposition. But they may be helped into truthfulness. Alas! they are often frightened out of it for all their lives.

Remember that the first untruth stains the pure innocent lips that God has given you, and may in time lead you to break one of his Commandments.

"They are slaves who fear to speak
For the fallen and the weak;
They are slaves who will not choose
Hatred, scoffing and abuse,
Rather than in silence shrink
From the truth, they needs must think;
They are slaves who dare not be
For the right, with two or three."

*Lowell.*

"Who by aspersions throw a stone
At the head of others hit their own."

*George Herbert.*

## VIII.

DEAR CHILDREN,

LET me hear you repeat the Tenth Commandment: "Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's house, thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's wife, nor his man-servant, nor his maid-servant, nor his ox, nor his ass, nor anything that is thy neighbour's."

Let us think why God should have given His people, the children of Israel, these Ten Commandments. Can you tell me?

They were given to teach the people to lead religious and moral, useful and happy lives; you see that I say useful and happy, for it seems to me, that when we know we are useful, we have already gained one element of happiness. To be happy without being useful would imply a degree of selfishness not possible to those who are really and truly keeping God's Commandments.

It is, therefore, God Himself who teaches us how we should fulfil our daily duties, how we should worship Him, honour our parents, respect the life, property, and good name of our neighbours, and show our appreciation of the beautiful gift of language by not debasing it—that is to say, by not using foul words or telling falsehoods. If we take God's lesson to heart, there will not be much amiss in our conduct.

But we are not only to try and *do* no *wrong*, we are also to *think* no *wrong*.

We cannot make boys and girls noble minded and pure hearted simply by forbidding them to do wicked

things, or by taking them out of the reach of temptation; we must make them see and note for themselves the ugliness of sin, and the beauty of goodness. Now all sin springs, more or less, from some form of selfishness or self-indulgence, and virtue, or the absence of sin, from self-denial or love of others. Thus God commanded His children to sweep out of their hearts all selfishness, which in the Tenth Commandment, is summed up in the word "Covet." If we can keep this last and Tenth Commandment, we shall not even have the desire of doing evil.

The heart, the source of all desire, must be pure if our actions are to be spotless. We cannot think evil and do good, we cannot love self above everything and yet lead self-sacrificing devoted lives; therefore we are distinctly told: "Thou shalt not covet." Thou shalt not wish to possess that which is thy neighbour's property, that which makes him rich or happy, or beloved, or honoured.

Do not envy your schoolfellow's quickness in learning, nor the position he may have taken in his class nor the reward he may receive; envy is a sin which must be swept out if you wish to keep your heart clean. Rejoice in the pleasures and successes of your schoolfellows; the very fact of your rejoicing will gladden your heart, and make your face pleasant to look upon. Indeed, when we have learnt not to covet, we have learnt the very essence or kernel of our religion—to love our neighbours as ourselves. Possibly you may have heard tell of the heathen who appeared one day before the wise and learned Hillel, saying, "I will follow your religion if you can teach it me whilst I am standing upon one leg." The Jewish sage answered directly: "What thou wouldst not have others do to thee, that do thou not to them; this is the whole law, the rest is commentary."

And indeed this one law, or whole law, as Hillel so wisely called it, is really expressed in the Tenth Commandment: "Thou shalt not covet." For, if we do not wish to take anything from our neighbour for our own benefit, but feel quite content in seeing him prosperous, successful, and happy, we must really care very much for him, or very little for ourselves. In these days of competition, when getting on in life almost means trampling someone else down (so hard is the struggle for life, so fierce the battle), I am afraid we are often tempted to break the Tenth Commandment. Oh! how we may long for a slice of our neighbour's wealth or good luck, or for a little portion of his robust health, or courage, or perseverance! Could we but pilfer a little from this neighbour, and a little from that one, we should be quite safe to succeed and rise to the top of the ladder. And so we are coveting what we do not possess, and our heart itself is growing debased and impure. Not only do we not gain what we covet, but we are losing our own gifts, maybe our pluck for the struggle in which we are engaged, our energy and our zeal in our work, our good temper and cheerfulness in daily life, whilst of course our actions suffer in consequence. For until we think rightly we cannot act rightly.

May God keep us from breaking this Commandment; let us pray to Him for strength and help, and let us resist the first accents of envy when envious passion comes knocking at our hearts.

Envy transforms love into hate; it is like the wand of that wicked fairy godmother who could make all good things seem evil, all lovely ones appear unlovely. We must struggle with it and overthrow it with all our power, for unless we succeed in becoming its conqueror, it will conquer us.

## THE LAW OF LOVE.

2 KINGS, IV. 3.

POUR forth the oil,—pour boldly forth,
It will not fail, until
Thou failest vessels to provide
Which it may largely fill.

Make channels for the streams of love,
Where they may broadly run;
And love has overflowing streams,
To fill them everyone.

But if at any time we cease
Such channels to provide,
The very founts of love for us
Will soon be parched and dried.

For we must share, if we would keep
That blessing from above
Ceasing to give, we cease to have;
Such is the law of love.—*R. C. Trench.*

## CHARACTER OF A HAPPY LIFE.

HOW happy is he born and taught,
That serveth not another's will,
Whose armour is his honest thought
And simple truth his utmost skill.

Whose passions not his masters are
Whose soul is still prepared for death,
Not tied unto the world with care
Of public fame, or private breath.

Who envies none that chance doth raise
Or vice; who never understood
How deepest wounds are given by praise,
Nor rules of state, but rules of good.

Who hath his life from rumour freed,
Whose conscience is his strong retreat;
Whose state can neither flatterer feed
Nor ruin make accusers great.

Who God doth late and early pray
More of his grace than gifts to lend
And entertains the harmless clay
With a well chosen book or friend.

—This man is freed from servile bands
Of hope to rise, or fear to fall;
Lord of himself, though not of lands,
And having nothing, yet hath all!

*Sir H. Wotton.*

## IX.

## THE TREE.

"And he shall be like a tree planted by the river of water, that bringeth forth fruit in his season, his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper."—*Psalm* i. 3.

DEAR CHILDREN,

YOU all know what great gifts of God are trees and plants, how we enjoy their shade in the summer time; how beautiful they make the landscape; and how dull and dreary a town looks that has no trees planted in its streets or open places. Trees are often mentioned in the Bible; let us think of some instances. First there will occur to you the description of the garden of Eden, with the tree of life, the tree of knowledge, that mysterious tree of knowledge upon which the whole story of "the Fall" turns; we can also recall the oak tree under which Deborah (Rebekah's old nurse) was buried, and the palm tree under which Deborah the prophetess sat when she judged the people of Israel.

Who among you remembers the parable of the trees in the book of Judges, and who can repeat the words of Ezekiel, in which he compared the vine tree to Jerusalem? Then there is the acacia tree of which the Tabernacle was built, and the cedar tree, the great cedar of Lebanon, which furnished the wood for the structure of Solomon's Temple.

A tree possesses two qualities—use and beauty. Let us first think of its use.

It purifies the air we breathe, by inhaling or drinking up the gas that would be injurious to us; it refreshes us by the shade of its branches, and by the moisture which it exhales. A dry, treeless country is not nearly so healthy as one that is plentifully wooded.

The tree gives us wood for building, and for endless household articles.[1] Also for the making of boats and ships, that carry our fishermen, our merchants, and brave mariners across the seas. Although the men of war are now fashioned out of iron instead of wood, still, their decks are made of wood, as they were in the days of our great naval heroes, when Campbell sang

> "For the deck it was their field of fame
> And Ocean was their grave:"

In some countries, where there are no coal pits, people are obliged to use wood for firing, and to cut down great forest trees so as to have a bright fire on their hearths!

Some trees, as well as many shrubs and plants, give us fruit for eating and drinking, supplying us with several of our best and favourite beverages. Think of the apple, pear, plum tree, etc., the cocoa-nut tree, the tea and coffee plants. And there is one tree, the cotton tree, which gives us a great part of our clothing. What should we do without it?

Other trees and plants have medicinal, or healing qualities, and are most valuable in cases of sickness. For instance, quinine allays fever, hemlock and opium cause sleep, belladonna unconsciousness, whilst the eucalyptus tree purifies the air, and is therefore planted in swampy fever-haunted places, such as the country about Rome.

Then the bark of certain trees is used for a medicine

[1] Let the children name some.

which gives strength and which we call "a tonic," and from the bark of other trees is extracted a gum employed for a variety of purposes. Pine trees give forth a delicious aromatic odour which is full of health and strength-giving properties.

Talking of perfumes, the sandal-wood tree is much used for its delicious scent, and the blossoms from the orange tree are converted into sweet smelling essence, which we call orange-flower water.

As for the beauty of trees, there is no manner of doubt about that. We all admire a stately wide spreading tree, whether in the winter when the delicate tracery of its branches stands out clearly against a frosty rose-tinted sunset sky, or in the early spring time, when

"The trees are standing in a mist of green,"

or in the summer when the trees are in their full pomp and glory, or perhaps most of all in the autumn when you find

"Every bush you see
With scarlet patches tagg'd and shreds of grey."

How ugly and dreary our towns would be without their beautiful parks and gardens, and what endless pleasure these give to many a one whose only knowledge of trees, shrubs, and flowers is gained from such places as Hyde Park, Kensington Gardens, Regent's Park, Battersea Park, or any of the parks and gardens of our provincial towns.

Now let us have a talk about the tree itself. First there are the roots hidden away and fixed in the ground. They prevent the tree from being blown down, or displaced, and they catch the soft rain that trickles into the ground, and feed the tree with it.

What we see rising up from the roots, tall, straight

and firm, is the stem; it is different in many trees, but it would be useless if it were not to support the branches, which go forking out from it in all directions. And these branches carry the foliage, which for six months of the year, in most trees, are the givers of shade and moisture, fed by invisible food carried to them by the roots.

The life-blood of the tree is the sap, which helps first to produce the flower and then the fruit—the aim of the whole tree's existence.

We must now return to what the Psalmist says: "Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful" . . . . and he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water that bringeth forth fruit in his season."

The life of the good man or good woman should have its own special use and beauty.

The roots that keep it firm and unwavering are religion or faith; they uphold the stem, or character; that should be upright, firm, full of resisting power; from it spring the branches or qualities of the good man.

The Bible stories have handed many down to us: Moses, the meekest of men, David, the shepherd king, Ruth, the good Moabitess, Esther, who saved her people.

But we need not only turn to the Bible if we want to know the names of good men and women, the history of all countries has written them on its pages, and we know many who have lived here amongst us, and whose names have become as "Household Words."[1]

There have been good men and women of all times, all ages, all races, and all religions!

[1] Howard, Wilberforce, Mrs. Fry, Sir Moses Montefiore, Gordon, etc.

Through God's grace they have been strong enough to resist temptation, and so to overcome evil with good.

Their lives would have been of little avail, had it not been for its fruit or object, for good, pure thoughts must be translated into useful deeds if they mean anything.[1]

There are two verses in the wise collection of sayings called Proverbs:

"The righteous shall flourish as a branch." "The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life." Do they not seem to fit in well with the third verse of the first Psalm which we quoted at the beginning of our chapter?

"And he shall be like a tree planted by the river of water, that bringeth forth fruit in his season, his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper."

"The righteous shall flourish as a branch"—the branches of the trees during some months of the year, are crowned with foliage—their crown and glory, and contribute, in no small measure, to the beauty of the world.

Shall I tell you how we also, like the tree clad in all the wealth of its summer glory, can help in making the world in which we live a brighter, happier, and a more beautiful place?

By trying to do some good and unselfish action each day, by withholding our lips from evil. The good man's life is always useful and beautiful; in fact, it can hardly be one without the other.

[1] Some men and women may be compared to the eucalyptus tree, for they sweeten and purify the air around them. They make the people who come in contact with them feel all the better and therefore the happier for having known them. No bad, low thought can be expressed in their presence, no ignoble joke indulged in, and no bad word spoken, and like the tree they destroy evil by their own purity.

I wonder whether you have ever read any of the prophet Isaiah's writings; at all events, remember this one verse: "Say ye to the righteous, it shall be well with him, for they shall eat the fruit of their doings."

And so try and remember that as a decaying tree cannot bring forth good fruit, so a man or woman of impure thoughts and low morality can hardly be expected to lead a life full of good actions.

The one must be the result of the other.

In the work of a good man's life, nothing is lost. "His leaf also shall not wither." The lightest word of the good and wise, say the Rabbis, has a worth of its own, and deserves to be pondered over.

"The day is thine, the night also is thine."—*Psalm* lxxiv. 16, 17.

"Thou art, O God! the life and light
Of all this wondrous world we see;
Its glow by day, its smile by night,
Are but reflections caught from Thee.
Where'er we turn, Thy glories shine,
And all things fair and bright are Thine.

When day, with farewell beam delays
Among the opening clouds of even,
And we can almost think we gaze
Through golden vistas into heaven.
Those hues that make the sun's decline
So soft, so radiant, Lord, are Thine.

When night, with wings of starry gloom,
O'ershadows all the earth and skies,
Like some dark beauteous bird, whose plume
Is sparkling with unnumber'd eyes;
That sacred gloom, those fires divine,
So grand, so countless, Lord, are Thine.

When youthful spring around us breathes,
Thy spirit warms her fragrant sigh;
And every flower the summer wreathes
Is born beneath that kindling eye.
Where'er we turn Thy glories shine,
And all things fair and bright are Thine."

*Moore.*

## X.

## AN OPEN WINDOW.

DEAR CHILDREN,

OUR talk to-day will be about an open window. Let us think of the use of a window. We can hardly imagine a room without one, for it would be dark, and not fit to live in.

We could not exist without light and air. Some poor people have to live in unhealthy cellars, where they enjoy very little light, and others have to work down below the surface of the earth, in mines where they have only the light of their lamps to see by, with very close air to breathe; whilst others, again, both poor and rich people, stubbornly keep their windows closely shut for fear of draughts, and so let in as little fresh air as possible.

Without light and fresh air, children would fade away and pine, until at last they would become sad little invalids, and die long before they have grown into men and women.

No one can work well, or accomplish any really good thing, unless he or she be working in fresh air and bright light.

When you have all been sitting for a long time in your heated school-room, you may not feel how close the air has become; but, if your head begins to ache, and your eyes grow tired, you may be sure that the room wants *airing*, as we should say, and the work will be better done if the window is flung open.

Now, I am going to tell you about some other windows —they are invisible ones, but still they exist for the matter of that, as many invisible things do.

These are windows in our own souls, which we keep tightly closed or open as we like. These windows of our soul let in light and air. But first let us ask what light this is that gives brightness to the soul's chamber.

We shall find an answer in the Psalms. Look at the 27th, verse 1 :

"The Lord is my light and my salvation."

Again (Ps. iv. 6 ):

"Lord, lift Thou up the light of Thy countenance upon us."

Also (Ps. xxxvi. 9) :

"In Thy light shall we see light."

And (Ps. xix. 105) :.

"Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path."

The light that we can let into our souls—the bright and pure light of God—is what I shall call spiritual life, for want of a better term.

That light comprises :

(1) The *Word* of God, which, as the Psalmist says, is "A lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path."

(2) The *knowledge* of God, which is given to those who lead a pure life : "The pure in heart shall see God."

(3) *Communion* with God, which means prayer, real heart-felt prayer, not words mumbled over without the spirit of prayer. This is the light that may stream into the window of the soul.

Light enables us to see, and to understand what we see, but the air which we take in with every breath is necessary in order that we should live at all, and upon

its nature, whether pure or impure, depends the health of our body. Now, having admitted light, let us open wide the window of the soul, for the pure fresh air to enter, in life-giving bracing draught!

And what is that?

It is the spirit of God Himself, which is indispensable to the real and complete life of the soul.

The breath of God, unseen, but felt.

My children, have you ever watched the rippling waters of a stream? Have you ever seen how the surface is stirred?

You hear the faint sound of the water, but the power that produces the sight and sound is unseen. Well, invisible is the spirit of God—no one has ever seen it, but many have felt it; they have heard it in the voices, in the written words of good men and women. It has helped many a poor struggling creature, and has proved very strong armour against temptation of all kinds.

It has given to the weakest people courage, to the strong modesty, and has crowned the most miserable with joy.

We can all breathe it, provided we open the windows of our souls wide. But, no doubt, for some, whose heart and lungs may be weak, accustomed only to the impure air of the dismal chambers of their souls, the strong fresh air, when suddenly the window is flung open, is almost too strong and too fresh. For there are regions in the heights of life, like the mountain tops, which tower above the plains, where the air is so pure that only those accustomed to dwell on those heights can breathe and live. The people, my children, dwelling upon these heights, are those who have drawn into themselves most freely and fully the spirit of the Lord; they are the inspired ones, the prophets and seers.

Examples are to be found in all ages of men, women

and children who have been helped with this great gift of inspiration. Moses was told by God Himself: "Take thee Joshua, a man in whom is the spirit, and lay thy hand upon him."

Elijah, the prophet, was blessed with this spirit, for the gift of which Elisha prayed.

Samuel, the child in the Temple, was full of God's spirit, for did he not hear the Divine voice when Eli's ears could not distinguish it? And David, the shepherd-boy, who slew the giant Goliath, and charmed away the madness of Saul, was also blessed at that early part of his life with the spirit of God.

Now, there are people in the world who are ready to help us by letting in more light and air into our souls.

They are those who, by deed and example, not only by word, show us how to do our duty, just the one duty that lies before us, however hard and distasteful it may be. Those who forget themselves in their love for fellow-men, those who bear pain bravely, who have learnt

> "That the courage that dares,
> And the courage that bears,
> Are really one and the same."

Also those who are good sons and daughters, brothers and sisters, all open the windows, not only for themselves, but to help and encourage others, and thus let in a broad stream of light, and a fresh wave of pure air.

Then there are those who try and teach us what is right and good for us to know.

Those who help us to resist temptation, who show us the ugliness of sin, the beauty of a pure life.

Those who put the best books before us, who let us hear the grandest music, or see the pictures that teach us something noble and inspire us to do great deeds.

Those who help us to the enjoyment of sights and sounds, by taking us out of this huge smoky city into the fresh green country—they are all opening so many windows into our souls.

But there are others who, alas! are shutting up those windows, or trying to do so. We must not let them succeed.

Who are they?

Those who are leading us into bad habits, and bad actions, by evil example. Those who give us bad books with low aims, who can only make music and painting suggest and represent ignoble thoughts and low subjects. Those who make sin attractive, and goodness dull.

They are fast closing the windows of the soul against the air—against the spirit, the presence of God. And soon they will be effectually darkening every window against the light, the knowledge of God, or goodness itself.

Listen to what the prophet Isaiah says to such people:

"Woe unto them that put darkness for light and light for darkness."

And listen to what he says to those who are eager for the light to break in upon them:

"We wait for light, but behold obscurity; for brightness, but we walk in darkness."

But, dear children, do not forget that you may be helped in the opening of those windows of the spirit by direct prayer; neglecting this, you will be keeping out the light with closed shutters.

It is strange how soon we grow accustomed to the dark, just like the poor people who work in the mines and live in cellars; but pray do not think there is any advantage in it; the health of the soul is bound to droop

and fade, like the health of the body, unless it can receive the light and air which come with the knowledge of God, and the constant in-pouring of His Spirit.

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## HYMN.

I NEED not fear: the Lord is nigh,
And He doth vigil keep;
He watches with unwearied eye,
Whether we wake or sleep.

No sparrow falleth to the ground
But He its course doth know;
He sees each thing, He hears each sound
However small or low.

The weakest child He will not spurn;
To Him He bids us come,
To Him in grief or gladness turn,
And seek our heavenly home.

I need not fear: His love is great,
His care will never cease;
And if we trust in Him, and wait,
He gives us joy and peace.—*Lady Lindsay.*

## XI.

## ON SERVICE.

"Behold, as the eyes of servants look unto the hand of their masters, and as the eyes of a maiden unto the hand of her mistress; so our eyes wait upon the Lord our God, until that he have mercy upon us."—*Psalm* cxxiii. 2.

DEAR CHILDREN,

I AM going to talk to you to-day about the duties of servants to their masters, and not merely about such duties, but also about what may be the joys of service.

The verse we have just read occurs in one of the Psalms or songs of the Bible; it shows us, from the first, that the writer did not look upon service as lowering or degrading; if he had done so, he could not have used these words which mean so much: "As the eyes of servants look unto the hand of their masters, and as the eyes of a maiden unto the hand of her mistress; so our eyes wait upon the Lord our God."[1]

The Jews as a race are not fond of service, for they are generally of a very independent character, and both

[1] We should remember that, according to Oriental habits, the hand of the master is constantly used to direct the servant in his duties. The master claps his hands, the servant enters, the former points, let us say, to his pipe, or to the cup of coffee which his servant brings him. He talks less than we do in western countries, and the eyes of the servants look literally to their masters' hands, for direction as well as for reward.

men and girls prefer almost any kind of factory work to domestic service. But it seems to me a great mistake that Jews or Jewesses should follow a few trades and occupations exclusively, such as tailoring, boot-making, cigar rolling, etc. We should like to distinguish the race, not so much by the business which they follow, as by the *way* in which they devote themselves to whatever business they have in hand; by their industry, their honesty, their fidelity and the personal interest they take in the success of their employers' affairs.

It would be well for all engaged in business or service to remember these words: "Seest thou a man diligent in his business, he shall stand before kings."—Prov. xxii. 29.

Then, as to independence, I have nothing to say against it; it is a great quality, and may help us in many ways to stand alone and not to depend too much upon others for getting on in life.

But independence of character can and should go hand in hand with a regular, well-ordered life, and also with the discipline and obedience required in service. Perhaps it is this very self-discipline and regularity to which you object. Yet these two qualities may do much to improve your whole nature and in reality to make you more independent and better able to stand alone. For they will teach you some very valuable lessons, which you can more readily learn in the school of service than anywhere else.

I should like to ask you what is required of you in service.

You will answer: to be obedient, and to do your duty, whatever that may be.

I will add to that: do your duty *cheerfully;* this one word will make all the difference in the relationship between master and servant.

Now, those boys and girls who have learnt to do their duty cheerfully have already learnt one great lesson!

Next follow what you may possibly think lesser virtues, such as: cleanliness, as opposed to dirt; order and tidiness, as opposed to a general litter; a gentle and quiet speech, instead of loud voices and often boisterous mirth.

Lastly, a real distaste for low amusements; strange to say, you will be getting independent of many of your old pursuits, and you will find compensation in other things, which may now appear to you as offering but little fun.

A good master or mistress will always respect a truthful, upright servant, who, when it is not a matter of conscience knows how to give way cheerfully.

And a bad master or mistress, one who fears neither God nor man, but who leads a lazy, selfish and vicious life, may be shamed into better things by the example of a good servant. Such cases are on record; you may even have heard of them yourselves.

And why, after all, should not Jews and Jewesses take their share in service? They are now able to enter all or nearly all professions and trades in most civilized countries of the world; they are no longer living as a nation within a nation. A Jew can be a soldier, a doctor, a lawyer, a government official; a Jewess can take her place as teacher of the young, as nurse to the sick, as accountant, as secretary—they can, without ceasing to be Jews, play very important parts in the life of the nation.

Domestic service must not be omitted from this national existence, and we should like to see our Jewish youth freely coming forward, and claiming their right to enter the useful army of *household servants.*

Let us now turn to our Bibles, and see if we can there find any special mention of servants.

We will look into Gen. ch. xxiv.; it tells us how Abraham, being an old man, well stricken in years, longed to find a wife for his son Isaac. So he called for his faithful servant[1] Eliezer, in whom he had perfect confidence, and sent him to his old Mesopotamian home, whence to bring back a bride for his son. The story of Eliezer's errand of trust is very simply and beautifully told; faithful, pious, and God-fearing, he was the very man to send upon such a mission; he carried out his master's commands to the letter, and, being ever neglectful of self, and thoughtful of his trust, refused to touch the meal that was set before him until he had delivered his message. "I will not eat," he said, in the old words of the Bible story, "until I have told my errand."

Early the next morning, when Rebekah had been won for his master, Eliezer begged of his host to allow him to return to Abraham.

Neither the temptations of the feast, nor the pleasure of repose, could wean him from the prompt performance of his duties.

Rebekah herself must also have known what a good and faithful servant meant. Otherwise, her nurse Deborah, who accompanied her out of Mesopotamia, would not have been mentioned in the Bible. Tradition

[1] Eliezer, the eldest servant of his master's house. He had complete command of all that his master possessed; he was the steward of the household. The slaves of the Hebrews were really servants, respected, and cared for, over whom their masters had no power of life and death. They could not be compelled to serve more than six years, and on the seventh they were free to go out at large.—*Exodus*, xxi.

says that she was sent from Canaan by Rebekah, who had grown anxious on account of the prolonged absence of Jacob, and that it was on his homeward journey, while this honoured servant was in his following, that she died. This event took place at Bethel—the house of God—and there she was buried under the spreading branches of an oak, which was called "the oak of weeping" in commemoration of her death.

Probably Jacob and his caravan passed by that tree many years later, when he was returning to his father's home in Hebron, and doubtless some herdsmen or other wanderers there may have told of the faithful and well beloved servant resting beneath its shade. (Gen. ch. xxxv.)

Nor should we forget to class Joseph amongst the zealous and trustworthy servants of the Bible. He, who had breathed all his life the fresh air of Shechem and Hebron, was taken from his simple tent and his flocks to be transplanted into the very centre of wealth and civilization. For he became the servant of the chief officer in Pharaoh's guard. He must have been a highly conscientious and noble minded youth,—loved and respected by his master, and when, later, through no fault of his own, he was cast into prison, he was chosen by the governor, on account of his rare virtues, to overlook all the other prisoners.

He rose yet higher in the ranks of personal service, for he became the ruler and governor of the people, second only to Pharaoh himself, though still the king's faithful and trustworthy servant. It is only those who fulfil each small duty in life honestly and conscientiously, who can hope to succeed in any great and responsible position.

And now let us turn to the 2 Book of Kings, ch. v., and find the story of the little Jewish maid.

Naaman, the great captain of the Syrian army, the commander-in-chief of the king's host, was the most powerful and honoured of men in all Syria.

But little did this avail him, who was suffering from a terrible disease—that of leprosy. Thank God! we have no lepers in England, but the illness, common enough in some countries, is both incurable and infectious. The Bible tells us that in Palestine lepers were forced to live apart from all other men, and to call out "unclean, unclean," when a healthy person approached them.

Well, Naaman, the great captain of Syria, was nothing more nor less than a poor leper.

His miserable condition touched the tender heart of a little Jewish slave, who had been brought back a captive [1] from her own country and presented to Naaman's wife. That was service indeed, from which there could be no appeal, for it was not likely that the little captive would be permitted to return to her own land. Hearing of Naaman's disease, and remembering the prophet Elisha, and the miracles he wrought, she said to her mistress: "Would God my lord were with the prophet that is in Samaria, for he would recover him of his leprosy."

This was repeated in due course to the king of Syria, who giving full credit to the little maid's words, sent Naaman, his favourite, to the king of Israel with gold and silver, and ten changes of raiment or clothes, and also a letter, praying him to cure the poor leper of his malady.

Well, the little maid was probably held to be truthful, or her words would not have been credited; and hers must have been a pitying, grateful heart, or else she

[1] A captive became a slave for life in a country like Syria.

would not have wished well to the master in a strange land, and she must have been full of faith, or she would not have thought of the prophet Elisha.

The whole story is a very interesting one.

The Bible tells us how the king of Israel received the king of Syria's letter.

Although he was a king and could do many things, such as take the lives of his people, he could not restore to life, nor make sick people healthy. One of God's prophets[1] is able to do more than the greatest monarch in the world.

It was to Elisha that Naaman had to go to be cured, and the directions given to the leper by the prophet were simple enough.

Too simple for Naaman to receive them in faith: "Go and wash in Jordon seven times—and thou shalt be clean."

Naaman turned indignantly away, for he had expected that Elisha would have placed his hand upon him, charming the leprosy away by an appeal to his God. But nothing of the sort; and he prepared to go back to Syria—a leper as he had come.

But he had wise servants with him. See what a prominent part the servants play in this story! they said: "My father, if the prophet had bid thee do some great thing wouldest thou not have done it; how much rather then, when he saith to thee: "Wash and be clean?"

Well, Naaman listened to these words, and acted upon them; the leprosy vanished, and he stood before

[1] The prophets or friends of God did not only live in the old Bible days; we have had many amongst us since then, whose doings will long be remembered, and who, often poor, humble and obscure, have been permitted to accomplish what has been denied to the great ones of the earth.

the man of God overflowing with gratitude, and endeavouring to shower presents upon Elisha.

But these were all refused.

Unfortunately, the story ends with an account of Elisha's servant Gehazi, one of the bad servants in the Bible history. For he coveted the splendid gifts his master had refused, and then invented a plan to get possession of them; this he thought he had managed very cleverly, forgetting that his master was a seer, or prophet, and was aware of the deception.

The heathen captain behaved with splendid generosity: the Hebrew servant with cunning and greed. But punishment came swift and sure, for the leprosy which went from Naaman clave to Gehazi and his descendants forever. Let us hope, however, that the captain's gratitude did not stop there, but that he remembered the little captive maid upon his return to Syria.

Read the whole chapter for yourselves, and take good note, that had it not been for the thoughtful, grateful, trusting little maid, as well as for Naaman's wise servants, he, the king's favourite, the captain of the host, would have remained a poor leper, an outcast amongst his fellow-creatures.

## THE ELIXIR.

TEACH me, my God and King,
In all things Thee to see,
And what I do in any thing,
To do it as for Thee:

Not rudely, as a beast
To runne into an action;
But still to make Thee prepossest,
And give it his perfection.

A man that looks on glasse
On it may stay his eye;
Or if he pleaseth, thro' it passe
And then the heav'n espie.

All may of Thee partake;
Nothing can be so near,
Which with his tincture (for Thy sake)
Will not grow bright and clear.

A servant with this clause
Makes drudgerie divine
Who sweeps a room, as for Thy laws
Makes that and th' action fine.

This is the famous stone
That turneth all to gold:
For that which God doth touch and own
Cannot for lesse be told.—*George Herbert.*

## XII.

## THOUGHTS ON THE TWENTY-THIRD PSALM.

DEAR CHILDREN,

YOU who have Bibles in your possession, and you who have not, will all know to which part of Holy Scripture I am alluding when I talk of the Psalms.

Some of you may have been given one tiny book, containing nothing but the Psalms; well, in that one book you will find collected the Hymns of the old Hebrews, or poems of our ancestors.

We should read them with love and reverence; they are very precious, and no work of poetry can be quite so precious to us.

They are, and have been loved by people widely differing from us in creed. Men and women of all times and many countries have sought and found comfort and help in the book of the Psalter.

The old Puritan soldiers went forward to the charge, reciting some verse from the Psalms, as their battle-cry; martyrs either to faith or to sad circumstances have gone to their doom with some words from the Psalms on their lips,[1] and we have many instances of holy men and women, who with latest breath have faltered out some beloved and well-known verse from one of these Hebrew hymns.

The Psalms touch upon a variety of subjects; some

[1] Lady Jane Grey, for instance.

are stirring and patriotic,[1] others full of sadness and despair,[2] again, others are one long shout of exultant joy, praise and thanksgiving.[3]

Some of them describe natural objects, such as the sky, the sea, beasts and birds,[4] whilst others tell of our own hearts and souls,[5] and the fierce struggle that is carried on within each of us between good and evil.

Many of them dwell particularly on the law,[6] or teaching of God, and others linger almost tenderly on His Divine love and care for those who put their unfailing trust in Him. Some of these psalms are more beautiful and touching than others, and perhaps more suited to our special needs; of these, we may take Ps. xxiii. as an example. Although it is very short, containing only six verses—it deals with great and important subjects, such as life and death. David the king is supposed to be speaking to us in this psalm. Now we know on good authority that some few of these beautiful poems or hymns were written by David, but not nearly the whole collection of Psalms; however, many learned people think that David himself, the shepherd king, was the author of Ps. xxiii.; let us therefore read it as if it came from his own inspired heart.

Do you remember the story of his early life?

A shepherd, tending his father's sheep, his boyhood was spent on the bare hills that skirt the village of Bethlehem. There he must have passed many a long hour in the heat of summer and the chills of winter. You who may be city born and bred, can hardly picture to

[1] Ps. xxiv., lxxxiii.
[2] Ps. lv., lxxiv., cxxxvii.
[3] Ps. xcviii., c., cvii., cviii., cxxxvi.
[4] Ps. cxlvii., cxlviii.
[5] Ps. xxxviii., xlii.
[6] Ps. xix., xx.

yourselves the loneliness of a shepherd's life, yet lonely it has always been, and so it must be.

For hours the shepherd sees no human face, as he sits watching his sheep that browse on the short grass of the hillside, or moor, where he has to lead his flock; he has plenty of time to note every change in the sky that betokens calm or storm, and so learn to distinguish the cry of each different bird that flies over his head, and the colour of each little wild flower that springs up on his grassy seat.

Some[1] of these lonely shepherd watchers, from constant study of the earth and sky, have had their minds and hearts so stirred within them that they have tried to express their thoughts in verse, and have become poets. Of these the greatest example is David, the shepherd king.

It was the most natural thing in the world that a shepherd should have made his own life the subject or key-note of his poem, and, being a poet, he possessed that magical wand which can make man seem to be as a flock of sheep, whilst the earthly shepherd becomes the Lord Himself.

In the same way, a soldier, accustomed to military rule whilst describing his own life, would probably make use of soldier-like terms; or one born to a seafaring existence might very naturally talk of human beings as ships tossed hither and thither on a stormy sea, relying for safe guidance on their compass, God's Holy Word.

Thus men's daily and often humble occupations have supplied similes for some of the finest poetry they have ever written, even poetry born of their love of God and hatred of sin. Now let us read Ps. xxiii.

You may be quite sure that David, the real David

[1] Amos the herdsman; the shepherd poet, Ettrick.

of the Bible story, knew all the duties of a trusty shepherd. How with crook and with staff he would have to climb the hillside, where the air was freshest and purest, and be careful to save the young lambs from falling over any of the steep places, such as abounded in the rocky country of Judæa. How he would have to guard his flock from the fierce noontide heat of the sun, and lead them to a sheltered spot—may be some green oasis in that rugged country, where they could lie down and rest near the fresh sparkling waters.

He knew, for he had learnt in the school of experience, as you will remember, if you have read the life of David, that the shepherd must be fleet of foot and bold of purpose, and prepared to face wild animals, as he himself had done, when he had fought for a lamb with a lion and a bear: coming off the victor.

Therefore, when the poet said: "The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want," he meant a very great deal in that one verse. He tried to express that under God's loving care he need have no fear that the heat would scorch him, nor the cold chill him, that hunger and thirst would torture him, nor that wild beasts would seize him.

But these are only the bodily or material advantages that the Divine shepherding gave to David; there were others which we must call spiritual, or belonging to the spirit as opposed to the body. Let us hear what he says: "He restoreth my *soul;* he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake."

Let us think what the word "restore" means. To bring back or recover. What can this mean? Why, the soul may have been wandering away, like a lost sheep, from the love of God and the accomplishment of duty. But the Divine Shepherd will bring it back, perhaps through

the voice of a parent, or teacher, or companion, or book, to the paths of righteousness or right-doing, as opposed to wrong-doing; from sickness, which is like sin, to health, which is like virtue. I said before that Ps. xxiii. touches on death as well as life. Let us read the fourth verse: "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of Death, I will fear no evil; for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me." Here again, David carries out his pastoral comparison. The flocks have often to pass through a dark and lonely valley, the towering hills on each side have shut out all view of the sky, the gloom can be actually felt, and the cold, as so often the case in those high regions, is intensely piercing. The flock tremble with a vague sense of alarm, but the shepherd stretches forth the long staff which he carries with him, and reassures the sheep by his guiding touch.[1]

We have all to pass through a still darker, and yet more mysterious, valley—the passage from life to death, where alone and unaided each one of us must go. But listen to the voice of the Psalmist; he tells us he will fear no evil, for he will be comforted by the guiding touch of God's staff, or rather by God Himself, the good shepherd, who will not leave his sheep in the hour of their bitterest need. Such guidance on God's part must however depend somewhat on ourselves; if the sheep have never trusted in their shepherd, have never followed the touch of his staff or the call of his voice, how can they hope to find him in their hour of distress? Children, remember your Creator in the days of your youth; put your trust in Him at once, follow His guiding voice

[1] It is customary for the Oriental shepherd to drive his sheep in front of him through dangerous places, and then to walk at their head, they following, when the flock enter the green pastures.

which speaks in your Bibles, and through your teachers pray to Him for purity of heart, and loving obedience to His commands; then He will be your guide and shepherd through life, your staff and comfort in death.

But David does not end this psalm or poem with the picture of the dark valley, brightened, as it only can be, by the loving hand of our Heavenly Father. He gives us another representation of Oriental life. The shepherd returns with his flock, and finds the table prepared for him. He is anointed with oil, being thus refreshed and strengthened after his day's toil. "Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies," he exclaims, "Thou anointest my head with oil, and my cup, a cup of blessings—overflows!" In the face of such proof of God's goodness, what grateful heart can remain silent? "Surely," continues the poet, "goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever."

This is a beautiful ending to a beautiful psalm. David's highest aim is not merely his own personal safety (whilst in danger or sickness, the valley of the shadow of death), nor his own physical enjoyment at the feast prepared for him when he returns from his work; but it is the possibility of dwelling with God, here and hereafter.

## THE SOUL THIRSTETH FOR GOD.

As the hart, with eager looks,
Panteth for the water brooks,
So my soul athirst for thee
Pants the living God to see;
When, O, when, without a fear,
Lord, shall I to Thee draw near?

Why art thou cast down, my soul?
God thy God shall make thee whole,
Why art thou disquieted?
God shall lift thy fallen head,
And His countenance benign
Be the saving health of thine.—*Montgomery.*

## XIII.

## THE TEMPLE OF SOLOMON.

MY DEAR CHILDREN,

I AM going to talk to you to-day about the temple of Solomon.

I daresay you can all tell me something about it, for it is probably a favourite subject of yours. Still, you may not have a very complete picture of it in your minds, and I am sure we can spend a pleasant and helpful morning in dwelling upon it for a little while.

You remember that it had been the great wish of King David's heart to build the Temple. He felt that the city of Jerusalem was not complete without its crown, where the ark of God, no more inclosed in a movable tent between perishable curtains, should rest forever in a worthy shrine.

So he consulted the prophet Nathan in these words: "I dwell in an house of cedars, but the ark of the covenant of the Lord remaineth under curtains."

Nathan, who loved and honoured the king, replied: "Do all that is in thine heart, for God is with thee."

But, although Nathan was a prophet, he was neither all-wise nor all-seeing. That very night God appeared to him in a vision and declared that not David, but his son and successor, should build the Temple. David's reign, alas! had been too often stained by blood, whilst that of his son was to be singularly blessed and peaceful.

When this was told David by the prophet, he said:

"Solomon, my son, is young and slender, and the house that is to be built to the Lord must be exceeding magnificent of fame and glory throughout all countries. I will, therefore, now make preparation for it."

Then he said to his son in words like these: "I longed to build a house for the Lord; it was the supreme wish of my life, but my hands are not unstained and pure like yours. I have been a great fighter in my day, and, although my battles have been for the glory and honour of God's name, still the Lord wishes His Temple to be built by one who is a man of peace.

"So now, my son, it will be your great and glorious task to build the Lord's house, and may you be given Divine wisdom and understanding for your task."

Then David went on to tell Solomon how he had already begun to make preparations for the building of the Temple. For although he was not to have the joy of actually building the Holy House himself, yet he was not debarred from getting the materials together that would be required for its erection. He had, therefore, accumulated great quantities of gold and silver, brass and iron, and had sent for clever masons to hew the stones, and for cunning workers in metal. But over and above all these, his great mind had pondered over, and taken in, every detail of the work, which, in due time, he transmitted to his son.

The Temple was to be God's holy house, His earthly habitation, to contain the one great altar round which the Levites would assemble, the beloved spot of all Palestine to which every Israelite's heart would fondly turn.

David gave to his visionary temple (for, of course, he never saw it,) all his loving care, and left its erection as a dying bequest to his son.

But it was not until the fourth year in King Solomon's reign that the temple was begun.

The site chosen for it was on the heights of Mount Zion.

Solomon then made an alliance or treaty with Hiram, king of Tyre, whose kingdom lay to the north of Palestine in the cool regions of Mount Lebanon.

There grew the famous cedar trees which could not have flourished in the hotter, more arid country round Jerusalem.

Hiram, who had been a warm friend of King David's, readily agreed to supply his son with both cedar and cypress trees, which were felled and floated down the sea-shore to Joppa, then as it is still, the nearest port to Jerusalem. In return, King Solomon sent a considerable present of corn and oil annually to King Hiram. Tyrian and Hebrew workmen, the very best and most expert that could be found, were chosen to work together in large companies, stone and marble quarries yielded up their treasures, and the great ships set sail south and westward to bring back beautiful textures and precious stones for God's house.

Despite the magnificence of the undertaking, and although King Solomon's heart was much set upon his work, he exclaimed at the very outset, with the true humility of a devout spirit:

"But who is able to build Him a house? seeing the heavens cannot contain Him. Who am I then that I should build Him a house, save only to burn sacrifices before Him."

Many have been the stately cathedrals and churches built since that time to the glory of God, and how often must not Solomon's words have found an echo in the hearts of the builders?

For seven years the work was carried on. The Temple rose as if by magic. No sound of hammer nor of any iron tool was heard on the spot, for the iron tool suggested war. The stones were cut to the required shape in their quarries, and then brought up to Mount Zion, there to be fitted together with nice precision.

At the end of seven years' time the Temple stood complete.

It was built after the manner of the old Tabernacle, only on a far larger scale.

First came the large outer court, containing the huge brazen altar for sacrifices, and the great brazen laver.

This was a place of assemblage for the people.

Here, on the three great agricultural festivals of the year, every Israelite who could leave his home would come and present his offerings to the Lord. The first of these festivals was the feast of Passover, *i.e.*, the anniversary of Israel's exodus from Egypt, and also the season of the year when the first ripened ears of barley appeared in the field.

The second was the Feast of Weeks, when the husbandman had gathered in his wheat, and the third was the Feast of Tabernacles, when all harvest work was finished.

Into this large court the droves of sheep and other kine were often led, and there fastened by rings to massive stone walls.

The sacrifices took place upon the huge brazen altar, but on Solomon's Feast of Dedication the enormous mass of animals were slaughtered in the middle of the court itself, which was hallowed or consecrated by the king for that purpose.

This has a barbarous sound to our ears, and we do not like to think of the immense amount of animal life

sacrificed as an offering to God, who is a Spirit whom we can best worship by a loving and penitent heart.

But we must not forget that we are talking of early times, when the old Hebrews, despite their pure faith, were not very far removed from the neighbouring tribes in their *form* of worship. Sacrifices of animals were common to all worshippers. Man, from the earliest days, gave of his best to God. At first, it was simply a thank-offering, but in later years, when he sacrificed in expiation of his sins, it was called a propitiatory offering, and finally, when he gave in all humility and reverence, an offering that was meant to express those feelings, it was termed a humility offering.

After years and years of sacrifices, the prophets taught the people that an obedient heart and a pure life were more acceptable to God than the blood of bullocks or the fat of lambs.

But to return to the Temple.

A line of chambers for the priests ran all round the upper part of the court, whilst on each side of it stood the kitchens where the sacrificial meat was prepared for the priests and their families, who were permitted, nay commanded, to eat those parts of the animals not offered up to God.

You can imagine for yourselves what a number of people were employed in the duties of the Temple!

The High Priest, with his attendant priests, the lineal descendants of Aaron, then the Levites, or the ministers of the priests, and lastly, the Nethinim or their servants.

Some had to assist in the offering up of sacrifices; others had to prepare the holy ointment, the shew-bread, and the leavened cakes; then there was the keeping of the entrances, the courts and chambers, the guarding of the Treasury and of the gold and silver implements,

also of the stores of flour, oil, wine, frankincense, and spices. Last, but not least, were many musicians and singers who praised God with the sound of the trumpet, the psaltery, and the harp.

The Temple was a little world in itself.

Besides the great altar of sacrifice there stood in the outer court the huge laver of brass, or molten sea, as it was called, containing gallons and gallons of water, in which the priests made their ablutions.

For, next to righteousness of life and personal faultlessness (that is to say, no man was permitted to be a priest who had any blemish, such as lameness, loss of an eye, or any malformity), spotless cleanliness was strictly enjoined upon all those who ministered in the Temple.

Numberless laws, most necessary in those warm climates, were laid down for the guidance of the priesthood, and were called the laws of purification.

Behind the great altar the court led into the first chamber, or Holy. But between the court and Holy was a beautiful porch, supported by a row of pillars, and adorned by two gigantic columns of brass, called Yachin [1] and Boaz.

These pillars, upon which nothing rested, stood upon golden feet or pedestals, and were covered with curious wreaths and ornaments, carved by the clever hand of a skilful workman. This porch was the entrance to the Holy, and the gate stood wide open. Here, in the Holy, was the golden altar for burnt incense, the golden candlestick, and the shew-bread table.[2] Here the priests officiated for the whole congregation.

This chamber or Holy was separated from the Holy

[1] Yachin means "The Lord strengthens." Boaz "Strength in it."

[2] The shew-bread was an emblem of man's dependence upon God for his daily food.

of Holies by a folding door of olive wood, and hung with golden chains.

What did this inner sanctuary look like, and what did it contain?

It was nothing but a small square chamber, *absolutely dark.* We can come near God but we can never see Him. There rested the Ark of the *Covenant*—an oblong chest of acacia wood. It contained the two tables of the law. Nothing but these. Upon the ark was the mercy seat made of pure gold. This was one of the most important parts of the Tabernacle and of the Temple, where the blood of atonement was sprinkled on the most solemn occasions of the year.

On the mercy seat, forming part of it, were two huge golden figures of the mysterious cherubim, half man, half bird; their wings meeting like a cover above the Ark.

The Holy of Holies, which the Glory of God alone illumined, was only entered once a year, on the Day of Atonement, by the High Priest and none other.

When the High Priest walked into the Sanctuary, the bells on the hem of his robes called the attention of the Israelites in the court to the fact that a sacrifice was being performed for them, and at the sound they prostrated themselves and worshipped.

When the beautiful Temple stood complete in all its glory, king Solomon proceeded to its dedication.

He chose the festival of Tabernacles for that occasion, when all the male inhabitants of Palestine would naturally come flocking into Jerusalem to bring their offerings to God.

Can we not fancy the impatience of the people to see the wonderful building, their eagerness to be present when the Ark should be taken to its temporary resting-place within the Tabernacle, and deposited within the Temple?

In that eventful year the Feast of Tabernacles was to last for fourteen instead of seven days.

What a great and wonderful dedication then took place! There had been nothing equal to it in the whole history of the world.[1] And yet this beautiful building, illumined by the presence of God, containing the Ark of the Covenant, the work of loving pious hearts and skilful hands, dedicated to the one pure faith of Israel, fared no better than many a heathen temple.

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"What's hallowed ground? 'Tis
  What gives birth
To sacred thoughts in souls of worth.
Peace! independence! truth! go forth
  Earth's compass round,
And your high priesthood shall make earth
  All hallowed ground."—*Campbell.*

[1] See 1 Kings, viii., and 2 Chron. vi. vii.

## XIV.

## THE TEMPLE OF SOLOMON. (PART II.)

THE Temple was twice destroyed by ruthless hands. The second time it fell to rise no more.

Imagine the despair of the people at the destruction of their Temple! It must have seemed to them on both occasions as if God Himself had cast His people for ever from Him!

And now even in this day, eighteen hundred years after the loss of what they held dearest, the Jews still turn with clinging devotion to the place where their beloved Temple once stood; the Jewish inhabitants of Jerusalem still lament and wail at the crevices of the walls that are even now left standing near the same holy spot, and the Jews living in the different countries of Western Europe include these prayers in their daily service:

"Restore the service to the inner part of Thy house (the Holy of Holies) and accept the burnt offerings of Israel.

"Let it be acceptable before Thee that the Holy Temple may speedily be rebuilt in our days."

Indeed God's ways are not our ways.

It may seem wonderful to you that, after bringing His people out of Egypt, after giving them His holy law and commandments, after making them the religious teachers of the world, God should have allowed His Holy House to be profaned.

But, children, the glory and magnificence of the Temple could not keep the people of Israel from sinning.

With their beautiful and stately building before their eyes, with sacrifices going on in their midst, with a whole tribe of priests constantly before them whose lives should have been spent in carrying out the word of God; kings and subjects, yes, even priests did over and over again evil in the sight of the Lord.

In vain the prophets raised their warning and entreating voices.

During the reign of Rehoboam, one of the sons of King Solomon, the disruption of the empire took place. By this I mean that the great empire of Solomon was divided into two kingdoms, that of Judah and that of Israel or Ephraim. Both kingdoms were successively governed by many evil and by very few good monarchs; but the kingdom of Israel was particularly unfortunate in its kings; its idolatry was the grossest, its morality the most corrupt. Altars were set up in every high place; incense was burned in all the groves; images of false gods filled the land. The Israelites encouraged magicians and diviners, and, worse than all, they caused their sons and daughters to pass through the fire, or, in other words, they offered them to the god Baal.

The Israelites were severely punished for their sins; not only was the kingdom of the ten tribes overthrown, but the people were carried away into the distant provinces of Mesopotamia and Media, whence they never returned. Thus the ten tribes were irretrievably lost, or merged in the race of their hated conquerors, the Assyrians.

Meanwhile, the sister kingdom, the southern empire of Judah, comprising the provinces of Judah and Benjamin, enjoyed the great advantage of including the capital, that is Jerusalem, and of possessing the magnificent Temple, or shrine of the Ark of God. There could be no second

Jerusalem as there could be no second Temple. But alas! the splendid memories that clung to the capital and to the Temple could not prevent idolatry from breaking out in the land. Already, in the reign of Rehoboam, heathen worship flourished in many groves, and on a thousand heights, which were consecrated to foreign idols. It was during the same reign that a king of Egypt invaded Judæa and marched into Jerusalem. He actually entered the Holy Place, where he seized a great many treasures, amongst other things, the beautiful golden shields which, since King Solomon's time, had adorned the porch of the Sanctuary. These shields Rehoboam replaced by brazen ones, which must have proved a very humiliating spectacle to the frequenters of the Temple. But, after a time, I grieve to say that the Temple itself ceased to be sacred in the eyes of the rulers of the kingdom; the gold and silver vessels were sold to the king of Assyria, the great altar was changed for one of a less beautiful pattern, the laver of brass was taken from its pedestal and placed on the pavement of stones.

The nobles grew hard and cruel towards the poor and weak, and there was no justice amongst the chiefs and elders, no charity or truth amongst the priests. Men gave themselves up freely to the sin of drunkenness; women led vain and self-indulgent lives.

The punishment came. The Temple was destroyed (588 B.C.), and the people, that is to say the greater part of the nation, were led captive to Babylon.

But—as you have often been told, and as you will all remember—Cyrus, the good king of Persia, conquered Babylon, and the Jews became his subjects just fifty years after the destruction of the Temple.

Permission was then given to the Jewish people, now

settled in Babylon, to return, if they liked, to their own country. This permission was eagerly accepted and acted upon, and, seventy-two years after the destruction of the first Temple, the second one arose on the same site. It was built upon the same model, but of less costly and splendid materials. The glittering porch, hung round with forty golden shields, was no longer there, and what was of far more importance, the Ark of the Covenant, with the tables of the law, had disappeared—said to have been buried by Jeremiah. But this second Temple was also doomed to destruction.

It is true, that the nation did not again relapse into idolatry, but followed in their worship every direction transmitted to their priests; they never went astray after other gods, nor "sacrificed and burnt incense on the high places, on the hills and under every green tree," as they did in the reign of Ahaz. They remained true to their religion, but, alas! they sinned in other ways.

They began to quarrel amongst themselves; one great family grew jealous and envious of the other, and they actually agreed to settle their disputes by calling in the help of the stranger.

The Romans first came into the land as arbiters of the quarrel, but they soon made themselves masters of the people, and Palestine became a dependency of the Roman empire.

Yet not even then would the Jews keep peace among themselves; they broke up into religious sects and fierce political factions, all hating each other for some small difference of opinion or of practice. At last the Romans, growing tired of a people who were perpetually at war, and who seemed unable to lead a peaceful and useful life, determined to make an end of them.

They besieged Jerusalem and burned the Temple 70 A.C.

When the Jews saw the flames rise high above their sanctuary, consuming all that was dear and sacred to them, they felt that their existence as a nation was destroyed, and soon afterwards they dispersed over the whole earth, to seek a refuge or a new home among every people and in every land.

Thus twice have they lost their precious Temple, and the outward and distinguishing mark of their faith. And here let me say that, just as the stately Temple, with its gorgeous ceremonial, could not save the people when their hearts and practices were idolatrous, no more could the exact performance of their religious observances preserve the people's life as a nation, when their conduct fell short of its rightful standard.

Purity of conduct should go hand in hand with purity of worship if a people wish to keep strong and vigorous.

Each one of you, dear children, can be a living temple to the honour and glory of your Heavenly Father; you can help to make His name loved and revered by all who surround you.

You, who are created in His image, can be, as it were, a centre of holiness to those amongst whom your lives are spent.

Within the inner chamber of your hearts is the Holy of Holies; keep it swept and garnished, always ready for the Divine Presence. The tablets of the law, the Ten Commandments, should find a worthy shrine therein, as they did within the Holy of Holies. But, remember there was room for little else; selfishness, malice, envy, or cruelty, cannot enter where the Divine Presence has already taken up its abode.

## NATURE'S WORSHIP.

THE Ocean looketh up to heaven,
As 'twere a living thing;
The homage of its waves is given,
In ceaseless worshipping.

They kneel upon the sloping sands
As bends the human knee;
A beautiful and tireless band,
The priesthood of the sea.

The mists are lifted from the rills,
Like the white wing of prayer,
They kneel above the ancient hills,
As doing homage there.

The forest tops are lowly cast,
O'er breezy hill and glen,
As if a prayerful spirit passed,
On nature as on men.

The sky is as a temple's arch;
The blue and wavy air
Is glorious with the spirit march
Of messengers at prayer.—*Whittier.*

## XV.

## ON CONDUCT.

"Behold how good and pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity."

DEAR CHILDREN,

I AM going to talk to you to-day about the conduct of boys and girls to one another, whether they be related or merely companions. There is no reason at all why the companionship or friendship of boys and girls should not be a very good thing for both.

The verse you have just heard applies to brothers and and sisters—not only to brothers. Now let us think what the word "unity" means. To be at one, to be united, like the links in a chain which pull together, work together, bend together, resist together. It is good, says the Psalmist, for brothers and sisters to dwell together in unity.

How bad then must it be to see them dwelling together in enmity, pulling away from one another, working out of sympathy with one another, seeking each his or her own happiness in disregard to one another! Yet this is by no means uncommon, for there are many families where there is more quarrelling amongst brothers and sisters than love and affection, where cross looks are oftener displayed than cheerful faces and bright smiles. It is a great privilege to be one of a large family, and to

learn from very infancy that ready sympathy and real unselfishness are about the best gifts in the world.

In a large family of brothers and sisters, who are constantly rubbing up against one another, and coming across one another, in a hundred little ways, there must needs be many occasions to bear and forbear, to give and take. Let us see how girls and boys can help one another, do one another good. We will begin with the girls: I think they should above all have a refining influence over the boys, making them gentler in their manners, more courteous in their ways, more careful in their speech. But in order to effect this, they must have a very high standard of their own, and know what true politeness and courtesy mean. Some boys like to show off their rough ways before their girl companions, and consider the use of coarse language and overbearing habits a sign of manliness. Depend upon it, when this is the case, the girls they have associated with are in part to blame. Then girls, by their own bright example, should teach boys how to bear the small disappointments of daily life, how to be patient when suffering from some trifling, but maybe very tiresome ill, how to be contented when they must perforce be stay-at-homes. If girls have this true refining influence, they will not only soften their brothers' speech, and make their manners more courteous, but also refine and ennoble their thoughts, and help them to live more for others. They must exert their influence quietly and unobtrusively, and can only gain it by deep sympathy and true affection, and by showing that they are ready to sacrifice some of their own little whims or pet dislikes for their brothers' sakes. A girl's quiet, uneventful, and monotonous life can often be wonderfully brightened and roused by her brother's companionship. Such companionship may be like a breath of

fresh mountain air blowing through a warm, closely-curtained room. Certain studies and pursuits can be followed by girls and boys in common. Of these, the open air pursuits, brace the girls' nerves and give them what they so much want—*pluck.*

Courage is indeed a fine quality, much needed by girls of all countries and all races, and, if not inherent, it may to a certain extent be acquired or gained. All pursuits which tempt girls into the open air will help to make them more courageous, and all games by which they can exercise precision of eye and nicety of hand will make them more active, more agile, and more healthy. Those fortunate ones, whose holidays take them to the sea-side, or into the country, should be encouraged by their brothers to search for natural objects of interest or beauty. Let them run the risk of wetting their feet, or spoiling their skirts, for the sake of taking in a good stock of health, or of learning many a useful lesson of endurance or self-control.

Their brothers and brothers' friends may often be able to give a halo of adventure to those holiday rambles, and to transform their little sisters' playground into a paradise of delight.

Girls and boys should be able to work, explore, and play together, provided each be willing to give up something for the good of the other. Boys are said to be more truthful than girls—perhaps because in some ways they are more courageous, or less afraid of reproof. Be it so. The girls should have a chance of learning from their brothers or brothers' companions that no character can be a really fine one that is not truthful. "Lying lips are an abomination to the Lord."

If boys can teach girls to be brave they must do so, not by laughing and jeering at them for their fears, but

by inspiring them with some of their own courage, teaching them what is the nature of the danger and how best to surmount it. Boys can therefore exert their influence on the side of truth and courage, and they can, as it were, strengthen the moral qualities of the girl as their strong arm should shield her from danger. Intellectually they can also come to one another's aid; for their gifts will be different. Girls may interest their brothers in their own favourite pursuits, music, drawing, poetry, or tales of fiction, as the case may be, and boys may give their sisters a keener interest in history, the history of the country in which they live, or in one of the many branches of science.

But, girls and boys, you can only help one another, or be of real use to one another, if you are truly unselfish; unselfishness on the part of the boys that develops into chivalry, unselfishness on the part of the girls that springs from real goodness of heart not from the surrender of principle or maidenly reserve. A boy's selfishness in his home life, which alas! is too often encouraged by his parents, means the preparation for a very contemptible manhood. The sister, however loving and unselfish she may be, should not pander to that selfishness of her brother, or the unhappy wife of that brother in years to come will surely trace much of his unkindness or even cruelty to those early days of home spoiling.

No—let the girls be as really loving and tender to their brothers as they can; let them share their sorrows and make their joys doubly enjoyable, but let them beware of spoiling boys into becoming lazy, selfish men.

A boy, as he grows older, should grow strong and yet be gentle; strong to resist temptation, strong to hold his own when he knows that he is right, strong to help the

weak, strong to shield those who are in danger, and strong to shame the cowardly. He can afford to be gentle; it is only the cowardly bully who is rough and rude. And let him show his girl companion that he appreciates her modesty and reserve. Many a girl, now loud, and immodest in her ways, might have been gentle-tongued and gentle-mannered had her brothers and their friends treated her with more courtesy. Had they not taught her rough games and foolish horse-play, she would be growing up to a very different womanhood. Many girls have to go out by themselves, going or coming from school or work, and they are warned by parents and teachers not to loiter or play in the streets. For the rough boys, who are to be found at every street corner, are unfortunately ready to undo all the good lessons girls have learnt at school or at home. Now, brothers, if you can help your sisters at such times, if you can walk with them to the place whither they are bound (perhaps a club or social place of resort in these days of girls' clubs), and shelter them from rude words or the ruder play that goes on around them, you will be taking a share of the burden of their lives.

Girls and boys in their everyday companionship can either raise or lower one another.

In connection with that old tradition of which I have already told you, namely, that no Hebrew or Arab would ever step upon a shred of paper, however small, for fear the Divine name might have been written upon it, a gifted writer has well remarked that God having written His word and printed his image on each human being—it behoves each one to be his brother's keeper, and not knowingly trample upon all that makes that image fair and God-like.

## AS YE SOW, SO SHALL YE REAP.

THE bud will soon become a flower,
The flower become a seed,
Then seize, O youth, the present hour
Of that thou hast most need.

Do thy best always—do it now,
For in the present time,
As in the furrows of a plough,
Fall seeds of good or crime.

The sun and rain will ripen fast
Each seed that thou hast sown,
And every act and word at last,
By its own fruit be known.

And soon the harvest of thy toil,
Rejoicing thou shalt reap;
Or o'er thy wild neglected soil
Go forth in shame to weep.—*Jones Vere.*

## XVI.

## "HEAR, O ISRAEL."

"Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one."—*Deuteronomy* vi. 4.

YOU are all acquainted with the prayer which begins with these words, and are doubtless in the habit of repeating them twice daily. Perhaps that is a reason for searching out, or, at least, for dwelling for a few moments upon their meaning. What we are in the habit of doing, we often do without thought, and as an old writer said: "I fear we may say our prayers *by* heart, and not *with* our heart." [1]

And yet the first words of our prayer ought to wake up our attention. "Hear, O Israel" is the cry that bids us turn our wandering thoughts to the solemn act of worship, and should prepare us to say with reverence the words which immediately follow: "The Lord our God, the Lord is one." [2]

This is the corner-stone of our faith, the doctrine upon which all Judaism rests. Yes, our God is one, He alone

[1] Prayer is *thought*. The Hebrew word for Prayer, תְּפִלָּה, comes from a root פָּלַל, which means to judge, and in one of its forms, to think.

[2] These words are the earliest that ought to be taught to a Jewish child, as they should be the last the Israelite utters when his soul parts from his body at death. They are repeated at the conclusion of the service of the Day of Atonement, because the end of that day is to see us part from the errors and sins of our old life, and to commence a new and better one.

is the Creator, He has formed and He sustains us, He punishes and He pardons, He causes light and darkness, life and death.

He is the author of all we see, of all we know; the Father, Judge, and Redeemer of all men, the one Almighty God. "Blessed be the name of His kingdom for ever and ever."

When, after our night's rest, we see the light of day once more shining around, and hear the voices of our parents and friends, and feel strong and happy, and eager for the work before us, shall we not, in the joy of our hearts, bless the name of the Lord; and, as night draws on, and darkness, like a gentle nurse, has hushed all nature into calm repose, and the stars come softly forth, telling their silent tale of wonder, shall we not again feel in our hearts and say: "Blessed is the glory of His Kingdom?" The *more* observant our faculties, the greater our knowledge, the more devoutly and sincerely shall we repeat those words.

From grateful admiration to worship there is but one step, and our natural instinct prompts us to bow down with reverential awe before the Throne of God.

But our Lord demands, or should I not rather say permits, more than homage.[1]

What are the next words of our prayer?

"Thou shalt *love* the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and all thy might."

He who reigns supreme over all creation bids us approach Him as children may approach their earthly

[1] What is the difference between homage and love? Homage is what subjects are required to give to their sovereign—the reverence and obedience we pay to superior knowledge or goodness. Love is the feeling which binds us to our parents, brothers, sisters, and friends—to all those who have been kind and good to us.

parents with devoted love. Poor, weak, insignificant as we are, we may yet look up to Him as to our Father, and say with the Psalmist: "Our help is in the name of the Lord, who made heaven and earth."

But our love to God is not merely to warm our hearts whilst we are saying our morning and evening prayer, but to be proved by what we may, perhaps, merely consider the trifling acts of our every-day life. How would you show your love to your father and mother? By obeying them as strictly as you can, by trying to please them in all things. And, in like manner, must we try to prove our love to God by obeying His word, by listening to the voice of conscience, by being at all times gentle, kind, and true.

When we are angry, and lose our temper, or give pain to any living creature, or tell a falsehood, we are not heeding the words of our daily prayer. Vainly shall we say them night and morning if we forget them during the day, vainly repeat them with our lips if they do not rule and guide our every-day life.

"And thou shalt teach them to thy children, and thou shalt speak of them when thou sittest in thy house, when thou walkest by the way, when thou liest down, and when thou risest up."

Younger brothers and sisters, or little friends, may be taught good or evil by your example; be careful, therefore, to give them the former. But how can you be constantly speaking those holy words in your schools or your work-shops, at your lessons, or your play? Has that injunction no real meaning then? It seems to me, on the contrary, that it has a very real and important one. Does it not tell us that religion, for what else is the love of God, can and should lead and guide us in our everyday life, that it is not to be kept, like our best

clothes, for Sabbaths and holidays, but to be with us on all days in all places. Whatever you may be doing, wherever you may be, dear children, in the school or in the play-ground, or in your own homes, if the love of God is in your heart your thoughts and your actions will be pure and good. When temptation comes to you, as in one shape or another it does to us all, you will try to resist, instead of giving way to it. To an angry word or cross rebuke you will not return a sharp reply or a sulky frown—the whispers of idleness will not be listened to; and when cowardice or vanity prompts you to say anything which is not strictly true, you will be held back, for you will remember that lying lips are an abomination to the Lord.

"And thou shalt bind them for a sign upon thine hand, and they shall be for frontlets between thine eyes. And thou shalt write them upon the door-posts of thy house, and upon thy gates."

At the time when these ordinances were given the Israelites were surrounded by the grossest idolatry, and required outward material signs to remind them of their own pure simple faith—a faith, which, alas, they but too often lost sight of.

But now that idolatry, with its cruel unhallowed rites, no longer exists around us, and visible signs are not needed to prevent the Israelites from joining the worshippers of false gods, have they become for us only relics of a past age, or may they still teach us something for our present use?

Yes, indeed, the Tephellim and the Mezuzah should still guard us from evil, and incite us to good—the Tephellim by reminding us while engaged in prayer that our powers of body, mind, and soul, are His gifts; the Mezuzah, by raising every Jewish house, the poorest

and smallest dwelling, as well as the grandest and most costly edifice into a temple dedicated to the worship and praise of the Lord. But you must not forget that the Tephellim and the Mezuzahs were only signs—signs of the love of the one true God, which should lead and guide us at all times when we are walking by the way, or resting in our homes. Never mistake the sign for the reality, both are necessary—the reminder for that of which it should remind you—nor deceive yourselves by thinking that without the love of God in your hearts, these written words are of more value than a glorious title adorning the cover of an empty book.

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## "I WOULD BE STILL WITH THEE."

STILL with Thee, O my God,
I would desire to be
By day, by night, at home, abroad,
I would be still with Thee.

With Thee when dawn comes in
And calls me back to care,
Each day returning to begin
With Thee, my God, in prayer.

With Thee, amid the crowd
That throngs the busy mart;
To hear Thy voice when time is loud
Speak softly to my heart.

With Thee, when day is done,
  And evening calms the mind;
The setting, as the rising sun,
  With Thee my heart would find.

With Thee when darkness brings
  The signal of repose,
Calm in the shadow of Thy wings,
  My eyelids I would close.

With Thee, in Thee by faith
  Abiding I would be;
By day, by night, in life, in death
  I would be still with Thee.

*James Drummond Burns.*

## XVII.

## HATRED OF EVIL.

"O ye that love the Lord, hate evil."—*Psalm* xcvii. 18.

THE above verse of the 97th Psalm describes in some measure, what the First Commandment, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God," requires of us. "O ye that love the Lord, hate evil." That is, everything that is opposed to the spirit of goodness, which is the spirit of God.

Your conscience, your teacher, and the words of the Bible are given you to shed light upon what is evil as well as upon what is good, so that you may recognize the former and avoid it. They are warning voices that bid you beware of the vain thought, the impulse to angry, cowardly falsehood, jealousy and envy, the inclination to self-indulgence and indolence, and many another temptation to do wrong which may beset your path.

These are the evils which you must hate if you would love God.

To repeat your prayers at stated times and seasons, to recite the Commandments, to keep fasts and feasts unless you *hate evil* will be of no real service. And how are you to show that you hate evil? Not by saying so—but by avoiding it, by flying from it. What you really dislike you would naturally shun! I do not think, dear children, that you can often be in doubt as to what *is* "evil," though you may sometimes try to deceive yourselves, or at least refuse to acknowledge to yourselves that you are about to commit what you know and feel

to be wrong. There is no lack of instruction as to what is good or evil. It is not merely in the written words of the Psalmist and Prophet of old, or in the many good books of the present day that you will learn these important lessons, but also in the good and wise words of the good and wise around you, and not merely in their words, but by their example.

There is one evil, however, which I think children sometimes fall into from ignorance, and that is cruelty. They do not, I can hardly believe, always realize the fact that poor little animals are as sensitive to pain as they are themselves, or they would not handle so roughly, or tease and worry any stray dog or cat or hapless bird that may have fallen into their hands. Boys would not, let us hope, if they were aware of the suffering they were inflicting, find any pleasure in throwing stones at birds, or worrying cats and dogs, or any other poor little animals that might not be able to escape from their tormentors. What a cowardly pastime it is to torture—perhaps to kill the weak and helpless. Those children who hate evil, will hate such cruel play, and will find *their* pleasure on the contrary, in protecting, feeding and petting those little creatures who repay kind and gentle treatment with grateful affection shown in a thousand pretty ways. And they will not only be kind and gentle to pretty, fascinating animals, to the frisky kitten, the rollicking, amusing puppy, but their hearts will be tender and compassionate to an old sickly dog, to poor suffering pussy, or to the tired half-starved donkey.

"O ye that love the Lord, hate evil"—well, to hate evil is not merely to shun it, and to fly from it—but if possible to fight against, to destroy, and get rid of it.

Real hatred of evil is what is required to enable us to effect any good. It is the spur by which great deeds are

accomplished, difficulties which seem insurmountable overcome. It is the wand, or rather the sword of our fairy tales brandished by the good hero who kills the wicked giant, and saves his trembling victim. What improvements have not been the result of hatred of evil! It inspired many a good man with courage and self-sacrificing devotion which enabled him to overcome all obstacles.

Not a hundred years ago poor negroes were carried away from their own country by English traders and sold like beasts. Husbands and wives were separated. Children were torn from their parents to become the property of perhaps some hard task-master, and this cruel traffic had lasted many years when William Wilberforce, and a small band of resolute men aroused by pity and indignation, determined to spend their lives in helping the poor defenceless, friendless negro. Many were the difficulties, of which I hope you will read one day, which beset those brave kind men, but at last their labour and patience were rewarded, and wherever England ruled, the slave trade was abolished and the slave set free.

It was hatred of evil—of an evil which produces misery, starvation and vice, which gave rise to the great and fast spreading temperance movement. Many whose hearts were filled with pain at the destitution and crime caused by drunkenness have long been and are still fighting with all their might against it, enlisting even children in their great temperance armies — in the branches known as the Bands of Hope.

It was hatred of evil—hatred intense and vehement, which Lord Shaftesbury (who died only a few years ago at the ripe age of eighty-four) felt for the cruel life endured by poor little factory children which made him

stand forth to plead their cause, and almost alone to win it!

Thanks to his untiring zeal and exertions the hours of work were shortened, fresh air was admitted into the close unwholesome factories, and some, at least, of the joys of childhood were restored to those wretched over-tasked little victims. And that great reform which gave health, and inestimable blessings to thousands of human beings, and should especially call forth a cry of loving gratitude from all English children, was the work of one righteous man's hatred of evil.

One more example must suffice for to-day, and that one I am happy to take from our own people; it is one which will appeal to you all without requiring many words from me. You will doubtless already have guessed that I refer to Sir Moses Montefiore, who spent a memorable and noble life in defending the Jews, in all parts of the world, from the attacks of bigotry and intolerance. It was intense hatred of the cruel laws and oppression under which his poorer co-religionists suffered in many foreign countries, that caused Sir Moses, regardless of danger and troubles, to undertake long journeys to Russia, Turkey, Spain, and Jerusalem: it was thus he made himself thoroughly acquainted with the sad condition of the Jews in many lands, and was able by his ceaseless personal efforts to change and improve it. He was ninety years old when he performed his last pilgrimage of mercy, but, neither the dulling effects of time, nor the growing infirmities of age could diminish the hatred of evil which fired that old man's heart. Let each of us in our several paths, however small and narrow they may be, try to imitate those great examples by hating evil, and setting ourselves resolutely and bravely to fight against it.

## THE PURPOSE OF LIFE.

HAST thou 'midst life's empty noises,
Heard the solemn steps of time,
And the low mysterious voices
Of another clime?

Early hath life's mighty question
Thrilled within thy heart of youth,
With a deep and strong beseeching
What and where is truth?

Not to ease and aimless quiet
Doth the inward answer tend,
But to works of love and duty,
As our beings end.

Earnest toil and strong endeavour,
Of a spirit which within
Wrestles with familiar evil
And besetting sin.

And without with tireless vigour,
Steady heart and purpose strong,
In the power of truth assaileth
Every form of wrong.— *Whittier.*

## THE SPARROW.

TOUCH not the little sparrow who doth build
His home so near us. He doth follow us
From spot to spot amidst the turbulent town
And ne'er deserts us. To all other birds
The woods suffice, the rivers, the sweet fields,
And nature in her aspect mute and fair;
But he doth herd with men, blithe servant, live,
Feed and grow cheerful! On my window's ledge
I'll leave thee every morning some fit food
In payment for thy service.—*Barry Cornwall.*

## XVIII.

## SPRING.

"To every thing there is a season, and a time to every purpose."
—*Ecclesiastes* iii. 1.

WHAT is the special purpose of the time we call spring? That time of the year when winter, with its short days and long nights, its cold winds and bare trees is passing away; when tiny blossoms are just peeping out of the earth, and tender green leaves faintly colour the brown twigs and stems, which seem to be suddenly awakening out of their winter sleep.

Full of beauty, charm and delight, spring is also a season of preparation, of ripening, as it were, for summer and autumn, which are hastening onwards with their flowers and fruit, and their fields of tall grass and waving corn.

But this feast of nature will not be spread without the care and labour of man given in due season.

The earth must be cleansed and made ready by the spade and the plough for the reception of the seeds; our flowers and fruit trees must be tended and cared for in the spring time, and when the labourer has done his work, refreshing showers, and a warm bright sun are still required to insure his success and produce a plentiful harvest.

Spring time, therefore, for the earth, is the time for sowing, and planting, and growing, when man's active industry and hard work are required to prepare the

feast which, with God's blessing, will in good time be spread upon the earth.

Yes, the summer flowers and the autumn harvest not merely follow, but depend upon the spring.

Can you tell me what message the spring has for you, dear children? Is this not your spring time? The time for growth and work, as well as for pleasure and fun? Upon the use you make of this season will depend the summer and autumn of your life, your manhood and womanhood, and even your old age will be fashioned by the use you make of *your* spring time. The Almighty has given you faculties that must be developed, limbs that must be made active and sturdy by exercise, parents and teachers to direct and lead you in the right path; but you must be diligent and obedient, or these blessings, like the sun's warmth, and the showers of heaven, which fall upon an untilled, and therefore barren land, will be of no avail.

*Now* is the time for you to form good habits, now must the seeds of industry be sown, now must the roots of faith be firmly planted, that you may grow up good and useful men and women.

And remember that your industry, and the knowledge you will gain at school, if you pay proper attention to your teachers, must not merely make you happier and cleverer men and women, but must enable you to increase the happiness of those around you.

The use you make of your joyous growing spring time will be blessed to others as well as to yourselves, to your parents, who may in you find the comfort and support of their old age, to your younger brothers and sisters, who will look up to you for advice, to your companions, to whom you will be a trusted friend, and to the needy and sorrowful, to whom you will be

able to give, not only sympathy, but help. If you would grow up to be strong and helpful, do not waste your precious spring time. It comes but once, and if its opportunities are thrown away, if you are listless and idle now, in vain will the sun shine and the showers fall; no seed will be sown, and you will become like the neglected, uncultivated field, with its useless, baneful crop of weeds.

One more lesson I think we may find in our comparison between youth and spring.

The spring of the year, like the spring of our life, is a happy joyous time; it delights the eye, the ear, and the heart with its lovely tints, and its cheery sounds; and thus, dear children, should your sparkling cup of youth, brimful of mirth and laughter, be allowed to overflow into many a sad and weary heart. You cannot, perhaps, imagine how much even a child's glad voice, like the chirping of a bird, can brighten the cheerless solitude of the aged in their enforced idleness. The sunny presence of youth brings with it a joyous atmosphere into the poor invalid's room, like the breath of spring to which he so gratefully opens his long-closed windows.

Do not, therefore, allow your spring time to pass without a thought for those who have entered into the darker, sterner season of life; be kind, gentle, and loving to them, ready to sacrifice even a little amusement to bring a smile upon some old wrinkled face, to support the tottering footsteps of some aged neighbour, and to spare him fatigue, and perhaps disappointment, by the help your stout little hands can give him.

And now, dear children, I would only say to you, remember the lessons of spring, and try to put them into practice.

## "REMEMBER THY CREATOR."

O COME, in Life's gay morning,
Ere in thy sunny way
The flowers of hope have withered,
And sorrow ends thy day.

Come, while from joy's bright fountain
The streams of pleasure flow;
Come, ere thy buoyant spirits
Have felt the blight of woe.

"Remember thy Creator"
Now, in thy youthful days,
And He will guide thy footsteps
Through life's uncertain maze.

"Remember thy Creator,"
He calls in tones of love,
And offers endless pleasure
In brighter worlds above.

And in the hour of sadness,
When earthly joys depart,
His love shall be thy solace,
And cheer thy drooping heart.

And when life storms are over,
And thou from earth art free,
Thy God shall be thy portion
Throughout eternity.—*Anonymous.*

## XIX.

## ON OBEDIENCE.

"My son, hear the instruction of thy father,
And forsake not the law of thy mother.
"For they shall be a chaplet of grace unto thy head,
And chains about thy neck."—*Prov.* i. 8, 9, 10.

"Reprove not a scorner, lest he hate thee:
Reprove a wise man, and he will love thee."—*Prov.* ix. 8.

THE duty of obedience is the subject on which I am going to speak to you to-day; perhaps it is one you do not much like, and which you think may be more pleasant for your elders to talk about than for you to listen to.

You may perhaps imagine that obedience is only demanded of the young, and that it is easy to prescribe for others what we need not practise ourselves—but, let me begin by correcting that mistake, for obedience is a duty equally binding upon young and old—in childhood, we must be obedient to our parents and teachers, and when we are no longer under their care and guidance, we must be obedient to the precepts we learnt in our early years, to the dictates of our conscience, and to the words of the good and wise, who speak to us, sometimes face to face, sometimes from distant countries or far-off ages—like the inspired words of the Bible.

There is an ancient Jewish tradition that God was especially pleased with the Israelites—when, after Moses had read the book of the Covenant before the people

they said—"All that the Lord hath said will we do, and give ear to." Unhappily in those olden times as in the present day good intentions were rapidly forgotten, and the temptations to disobedience but feebly resisted, and in spite of all they had seen and heard, the Israelites brought upon themselves sorrow and troubles by their repeated acts of disobedience.

It was to reprove the Israelites for their sins of disobedience that the prophets were sent to our forefathers—when they listened to those great teachers, peace and happiness ensued—but too often they turned a deaf ear to the words of rebuke which stung them to anger instead of to repentance. Oh! if a prophet were to come to us, I fancy I hear you say, we should be quite ready to listen to and obey *him*, but our teachers are often impatient or cross, our master or mistress over exacting and fault finding, our parents not always just in their demands or complaints — that may be so — but remember that to the Israelites the prophets did not appear so far above them in wisdom and holiness as we see them to have been. They were human beings, therefore imperfect, and occasionally falling into error like themselves, yet how happy it would have been for the Jews of old if they had humbly hearkened to the words of warning and severe reproof of those great though not faultless teachers.

Even Moses, the greatest of the prophets, who, we are told in language that we can hardly understand, was admitted into the presence of the Almighty, and allowed to be the bearer of his Commandments, not only to the Israelites, but to mankind; even he was not absolutely faultless, and such were, though on a lower level, all the prophets who taught and rebuked our fathers and who as we read their words in the Bible, teach and rebuke us

still. The prophets did not belong to any particular class; Jeremiah and Ezekiel were priests, Amos a poor herdsman; they came at various epochs, and had various missions to perform, which they performed according to their knowledge and character in various ways, but all preached by exhortation, rebuke or example, the great lesson of obedience.

And now what qualities do you think we require to help us to practise obedience? Humility and moral courage appear to me the most essential. I should like to call them the handmaids of obedience. We must be humble minded to believe and acknowledge that those who are older than ourselves are also wiser, and that it is our duty to listen to their advice, and we must have courage, not merely to say *yes* and *no*, but also to act yes and no; it is easy to pronounce these two little words, but the difficulty is in acting up to them in the face of temptation, when pleasure, vanity, idleness or anger lead or rather drag us away from the path we had consented and doubtless intended to follow.

Walking down the Thames Embankment I have often stood still for a few minutes to follow the movements of the numberless steamers, sailing and rowing boats, gliding on that busy water thoroughfare, and admired the skill of the sailors in threading their way along that crowded river. What fearful accidents might occur if those ships and boats were not manned by sailors always scrupulously obedient to the orders of their captain! How few would bring their cargo safe to land! In strict obedience lies their only safeguard. Well, dear children, we are all sailors on the river of life. Some, like yourselves, have only commenced your voyage, others may be near its end—but storms and perils, at one time or another, we must all encounter. Let us

take a lesson then from the sailors, and see how they contrive to escape the dangers around them.

If you have ever been in a boat you will doubtless remember what attention the sailor pays to his rudder, by which he keeps in the right direction; how at the word of command he unfurls his sails or diligently plies his oars. Firm resolution to obey the voice of your parents and teachers is the *rudder* that will keep your little bark in its proper course, and if the current of angry passion or evil example should be wafting it astray, you must unfurl your *sail* of moral courage, and when the wind is hushed and all is calm, and your boat is lying still on the quiet waters, you must not give way to indolent idleness, but, obedient to the voice of duty, take up your *oars* of active industry, and with rapid strokes make good progress towards the goal your parents and friends are anxious you should reach. And what is that goal to which obedience alone can lead you? A useful, happy, honoured life spent in doing the will of the Lord our God.

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## TREASURES.

LET me count my treasures,
All my soul holds dear,
Given me by dark spirits
Whom I used to fear.

Through long days of anguish
And sad nights, did Pain
Forge my shield, Endurance,
Bright and free from stain!

Doubt, in misty caverns,
'Mid dark horrors sought,
Till my peerless jewel,
Faith to me she brought.

Sorrow, that I wearied
Should remain so long,
Wreathed my starry glory,
The bright Crown of Song.

Strife, that racked my spirit,
Without hope or rest,
Left the blooming flower,
Patience, on my breast.

Suffering, that I dreaded,
Ignorant of her charms,
Like the fair child, Pity,
Smiling, in my arms.

So I count my treasures,
Stored in days long past—
And I thank the givers,
Whom I know at last!

*A. A. Procter.*

## XX.

## THE GOOD WORKMAN.

DURING the long reign of Manasseh, the successor of Hezekiah, and that of his son Amon, idolatry had been practised in Judah.

In the 2nd book of Kings, chap. xxi., we read that Manasseh built up again the high places which Hezekiah his father had destroyed, and that he raised up altars for Baal, and made a grove as did Ahab, king of Israel, and worshipped all the host of heaven and served them—and he built altars for all the host of heaven in the two courts of the House of the Lord, and he made his son pass through the fire, and observed times, and used enchantments, and dealt with familiar spirits and wizards. He wrought much wickedness in the sight of the Lord.

And of his son Amon we also read, that he forsook the Lord God of his fathers and walked not in the way of the Lord." But the youthful Josiah, who succeeded his father Amon on the throne, did that which was right in the sight of the Lord, and in the twelfth year of his reign when, he had come to man's estate, he began to purge Judah and Jerusalem from the high places and the groves and the carved images, all copied from surrounding nations and used for idolatrous purposes. And when he had destroyed them, he set himself to repair the Temple of Jerusalem, which had been so long neglected and allowed to fall into decay.

And he sent Shephan and Moaserah, the governor of

the city, and Yoat, the son of Joahaz, the recorder, to repair the House of the Lord his God. And they came to Hilkiah, the high priest, and delivered the money that was brought into the house of God, which the Levites, the keepers of the threshold, had gathered of the land of Manasseh and Ephraim, and of all the remnant of Israel and of all Judah and Benjamin and of the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and they delivered it into the hands of the workmen that had the oversight of the house of the Lord, and gave it to amend and repair the House, even to the carpenters and to the builders gave they it to buy hewn stone and timber for couplings, and to make beams for the houses which the kings of Judah had destroyed. And the men did the work faithfully. And in the 2nd book of Kings, chap. xxii., we read these words concerning the honesty of the workmen: "Howbeit there was no reckoning made with them of the money that was delivered into their hands for *they* dealt faithfully." Yes, they must have been truly good and honest, those workmen in the Temple; faithful, as the Bible says, faithful to their employers and to their conscience! As no reckoning was made with them, how easily could they have deceived their employers, by asking for more money than they had fairly earned—by working lazily in a half-hearted fashion, thus wasting the time for which they were paid, or in putting bad and cheap materials in the place of good ones.

How often do we not see or hear of such dishonest practices in these days—even when the workman or woman is, to a certain degree, under the control of an overseer or manager.

But our forefathers, those Jewish workmen of old, could be trusted, for *they* dealt faithfully.

Well, dear children, let us all take a lesson from their example. Let us resolve to do our work faithfully. We may have no great talents or much learning, but we can all be honest, conscientious, and true, and do our best, and then we shall also feel that we have been faithful in the performance of our work.

Perhaps you will say or think that it is quite a different matter—working for the shop, the factory, the hard taskmaster, or perhaps somewhat severe exacting mistress—to working for the restoration of the Temple. It would, indeed, have been wicked of the workmen to have scamped their work in the beautiful House of God, which had been built according to the inspired words of His prophets. But what comparison is there between the adornment of the Temple and the finishing of a very commonplace garment for some city or west-end shop, or learning and repeating one's lessons at school?

Well, I will agree with you so far as to say that it would have been wicked in the workmen of old to have shown dishonesty or carelessness or greed in the accomplishment of their work in the Temple; but let me hasten to add that I do not think they would have been more wicked than those who do whatever work has been intrusted to them, carelessly, negligently, or dishonestly at the present day. For, dear children, if the Temple was built after the directions of the Lord, and therefore looked upon as the House of God—how much more must we look upon this great world, called into existence by Him, fashioned and upheld by Him, as the Temple of the Lord.

We cannot escape from His holy presence; He looks down upon every worker here and beholds our work, whether it be good or whether it be evil. Let us think of that when we are doing our work, whatever that work

may be, remember that you are in God's hands, and that the eye of the Master is upon you as it was upon the workmen in the Temple. To every one of us is given some work to do, and if we are lazy or dishonest, and neglect or scamp our work, we shall be doing evil in the sight of God, and marring the beauty of His Temple. Never forget that you are in His presence—workmen in His Temple. And as those workmen of old took a pride and pleasure in doing their work well because they felt they were embellishing the House of God, so should you likewise take a pride and pleasure in the performance of your work, whatever that work may be. For remember that, by your industry, honesty, and zeal, you will be helping to bring light instead of darkness, the beauty of order and purity instead of the hideous disfigurement of vice and misery into the Temple of the Lord.

And now, dear children, if you are ever inclined to be indolent and listless, to put off for to-morrow what should be done to-day, or worse still, not honestly to fulfil the orders of your employers or the requests of your teachers, may the thought of the workmen in the Temple arrest you in that downward course and lead you into the fruitful paths of honest, active industry.

Wherever our lot may be cast, in the village or in the city, in foreign lands or in our own dear England, among friends or strangers, we shall still be in the House of God; let us earnestly pray to Him that He may give us strength and power to do our work faithfully, on this wonderful earth the all-embracing Temple of the Lord.

## TO-DAY.

Lo, here hath been dawning
  Another blue day!
Think, wilt thou let it
  Slip useless away?

Out of eternity
  This new day is born.
Into eternity
  At night will return.

Behold it aforetime,
  No eye ever did;
Lo, soon it forever
  From all eyes is hid.

Here hath been dawning
  Another blue day,
Think, wilt thou let it
  Slip useless away?

*Thomas Carlyle.*

## XXI.

## INTEGRITY OF HEART AND SKILFULNESS OF HAND.

"He chose David also his servant, and took him from the sheepfold. From following the ewes, great with young, he brought him to feed Jacob, his people, and Israel, his inheritance.

"So he fed them according to the integrity of his heart, and guided them by the skilfulness of his hands."—*Ps.* lxxviii. 70, 71, 72.

WHY was David chosen to be the ruler of Israel? Why was the youthful shepherd called away from his flocks to receive a royal crown? Was it not because the humble duties intrusted to him had been conscientiously, courageously, and skilfully fulfilled? He had displayed skill in leading his sheep, courage in defending them from danger and harm, and tender humanity in his fostering care and protection of the weak. God, before whom all hearts are bare, knew that David, though far from perfect, possessed those qualities which beseem a ruler, therefore He took him from the sheepfold and brought him to feed Jacob, his people, and Israel his inheritance, and David fed them according to the integrity of his heart, and the skilfulness of his hands. And those qualities which the shepherd boy possessed in a superlative degree, are those which befit and ennoble every station in life, be it high or low, great or humble. Let us all strive to acquire them. Through them we shall be able to be of some use in the world, and shall be allowed to feel that happy glow which brightens

the hearts of those who have brightened other hearts, or saved from pain and trouble any living creature.

And now let us inquire into the full meaning of those words.

Integrity of heart and skilfulness of hand. By the former, I believe perfect sincerity and truthfulness are intended—without perfect sincerity and truthfulness neither kindness nor learning can avail to make us really wise and helpful. It is through them that we gain mental strength and vigour, that we are able to combat what is evil and defend the right, that our good intentions become acts. They make us scorn to tell a falsehood, even when we are shrouded in what appears to be the impenetrable darkness of secrecy, only appears to be, for you know, dear children, that nothing is hidden from the all-seeing eye of God.

It was in the integrity of his heart that David looked after the flock intrusted to his care. Conscientiously and truthfully he followed the directions given to him, with courage he defended his sheep from the prowling wolf, and carefully tended and watched over the little bleating lamb. In the plains and valleys where his flocks were pastured he was ever mindful of his charge, thinking of their safety and well-being more than of his own comfort and pleasure, zealously fulfilling his duties to the utmost of his power in the position in which he had been placed.

No man, say the Jewish sages, is ever chosen by God for a great task, until he has been proved faithful in a small one. Both to Moses and to David, a heavenly voice is said to have exclaimed: "Thou hast shown thyself faithful as a keeper of sheep, thou shalt be shepherd to my people Israel."

But it was not only through the integrity of his heart,

but also through the skilfulness of his hands that David guided his flock, knowledge and skill were required to enable the shepherd lad to choose the best pastures, to evade, if possible, the cunning enemy, and to look after the health of his sheep during the trying summer heat, or to find a shelter for them when the destructive storm was raging around, knowledge, adroitness—all that you are, or should now be learning at home or at school—may be understood in the words, "the skilfulness of his hands." The more knowledge you can acquire, the more adroit you have become in any work, the more useful, the better and the happier you will be. Heart and hand, or perhaps I should say heart and brain, for it is the brain that guides the hand, must work together. "Integrity of heart and skilfulness of hand."

And now, dear children, in the happy hey-day of your youth, you must place those aims before you and follow them with zeal and earnestness. More fortunate than many of your elders, you have much to help and stimulate you now, which was sadly lacking in former years. Let me mention the numerous religious classes, instead of the one or two Sabbath schools of the past. Then, only a certain number of children could be admitted, whereas, now you can all receive that invaluable instruction which is to shape your conduct, and hallow and purify your life. Strive to follow the light with which your teachers illumine the path you should tread, and in spite of temptations and difficulties we must all encounter, walk humbly and bravely on in the shining track of heavenly wisdom, for "her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace."

Then you have your excellent day schools where, if you give proper application to your lessons, you will not only gain a great deal of useful knowledge, but im-

prove all your mental faculties, and last, though perhaps not least, in the good that may be derived from them are the night schools and recreative classes. In the latter you have now an opportunity of acquiring skilfulness of hand; pray, do not neglect it. In those happy evening classes, how many slow, awkward little hands have become dexterous and quick! how many boys and girls have been put in the way of learning useful arts! A toothsome dish is made by one little maiden, and a well-washed, carefully ironed garment turned out by another. Perhaps, among the girls and youths who attend those evening classes, there may be a few who possess some talent that only requires cultivation and industry to be developed, and thus really useful or beautiful work may be produced. and an artist discovered in the youthful workman. But even those who are not endowed with any especial artistic qualities will doubtless acquire sufficient ability to be able to add in various ways to the comforts and adornments of life, or to increase their own means of enjoyment or of usefulness.

In Switzerland, during the long winter evenings, when the labourer must perforce remain indoors, he does not sit with idle hands listening to the wind or the avalanche falling down the mountain side, but sets busily to work, and, according to his taste and ability, makes useful pieces of furniture for his own cottage, or carves various wooden articles; and in the summer months the tourist buys his picture frames, paper-knives, or book stands, and takes them home with him as pleasant remembrances of his rambles among the Alps.

In some parts of France, home arts consist in very pretty ivory carvings, whilst in others dainty embroideries employ many hands, and all these various industries, followed during leisure hours at home, bring pleasure as

well as profit to those who have the necessary ability and training to turn out really good work.

We seem to have travelled far away from the plains of Judæa and the shepherd tending his flock, but the words of Scripture, and the examples presented in the Bible, should be of use to every one of us, even in this distant land and age. We must learn to adapt them to our own lives and circumstances. The end to be desired and to be accomplished is the same, though the means to attain it must vary according to the country and the age we live in. Those *means* your parents and teachers will place before you, and help you to make use of, and through them and your own exertions you will, with the blessing of God, be able to acquire integrity of heart and skilfulness of hand.

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"He who walks in virtue's way
Firm and fearless walketh surely,
Diligent while yet 'tis day,
On he speeds, and speeds securely;
Flowers of peace beneath him grow,
Lines of pleasure brighten o'er him,
Memory's joys behind him go,
Hope's sweet angels fly before him."

*Dr. Bowring.*

## XXII.

## "VANITY OF VANITIES."

"Vanity of vanities all is vanity."—*Preacher*, xii. 8.

MY DEAR CHILDREN,

HAVE you ever heard of the portion of the Holy Scriptures which is called The Preacher, קהלת in Hebrew. This portion comprises words of wisdom by the Great King Solomon; all of you, I am sure, know the history of Solomon, the son of David, who, though not the eldest was elected by his father to be king of Israel.

Solomon whose very name signified Peace, was chosen to build the Temple, because his reign was to be a peaceful one, whilst King David had been debarred from erecting a House of God on account of the many bloody wars he was engaged in.

Solomon was a great king in every sense of the word, but he showed his greatness most when God said to him: "What shall I give thee?" He did not ask for riches or worldly prosperity, he did not express any material want, or the desire for long life, but he said: "Give me, O Lord, an understanding heart, that I may discern between good and bad." His request was granted, for God gave him wisdom, "and, says the Holy Writ, the speech pleased the Lord so that He not only blessed Solomon with wisdom but He gave him great riches, and besides prosperity of every kind, neighbouring kings and princes brought him presents, and even the Queen of Sheba who had heard of Solomon's greatness and

wisdom came to ask him questions and to offer him precious gifts. It would take too long if I related to you various instances of the King's wisdom; the Bible as well as the Talmud relate many examples of Solomon's judgment and understanding, some of which are perhaps known to you. King Solomon, as we have already learnt, enjoyed every happiness and every worldly prosperity; and yet this same prosperous king spoke the words which I have quoted at the beginning of this address:

"Vanity of vanities, says the Preacher, all is vanity." How are we to interpret this saying?

Solomon has shown us very plainly when he asked God for understanding that he thought all outward gifts very poor and insufficient for man's happiness.

What good can riches do us, if our heart is cold and incapable of feeling how we ought to employ them; how can they make us happy if our conscience reproves us for selfishness and want of charity? How can earthly joys afford us satisfaction when we fail in our duty to God and our neighbour?

Do you not agree with me, my dear children, that all these outward pleasures cannot compensate for the joy of making others happy, that we cannot be happy unless we carry out God's Commandments, that is, perform our duty and help our fellow-creatures?

Well might King Solomon say "vanity of vanities, all is vanity" for he knew how little satisfaction mere outward things give to the heart.

Many of us think too much of outer display. Some like smart dresses and gay ribbons, and spend their hard won earnings in unnecessary finery; this is idle vanity.

We ought all to try and dress neatly as well as cleanly. It has been said "cleanliness is next to Godliness,"

and truly we must remember that our body is the gift of God, and it is our duty to keep this gift clean and holy.

But let us not mistake display for neatness, or showiness for cleanliness; we must not give too much thought or time to the adornment of our person, but devote our whole strength to the improvement of our heart and soul.

I do not wish, however, my dear children, that the words I have quoted should leave a feeling of discouragement in your hearts, nor indeed will they do so, if you will bear in mind that the same great preacher, who examined very closely what people most highly prized, and found that it was "all vanity," yet, before he laid down his pen was convinced that there was something that was not "all vanity," and expressed this in the very last words of the wondrous little book I have been talking to you about. "Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter. Fear God and keep his Commandments, for this is the whole duty of man. God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good or whether it be evil."—The Preacher, xii. 13, 14.

And now, in illustration of what I have just told you, I wish to relate to you one of the many admirable and instructive stories of the ancient Jewish sages.

A man had three friends; to the first of these he was most warmly attached; the second he liked less, and the third came last in his affections, although of all the three he was the truest friend to him. This man was summoned before the judge and accused of some grave offence, of which, however, he was entirely innocent. He now appealed to all three friends to accompany him before the judge and to help him in his hour of trial.

The friend whom he valued most declined his request, on the plea that he was too busy; the second friend followed him as far as the gate of the Court of Justice, and then turned back terrified by the voice of the stern judge; but the third friend, on whom he counted least, went with him before the judge, and pleaded his cause so eloquently, that he was not only declared innocent, but very amply rewarded.

Shall I explain to you the moral of this story? The man here described, is meant to be any one of us, for after death we are all called before the throne of the Great Judge, the Almighty God.

And the three friends, who are they? The first one is *money*, which so many of us prize as our greatest possession, but which deserts us the moment we part from life; the second is the earthly friend who accompanies our body to the grave, and then turns back, for he, even if he wished it, is not permitted to follow us farther, but the third friend represents the good actions which accompany us beyond the grave to the throne of the Great Judge, and there will speak for us and help us to attain the eternal happiness which the Almighty alone can adjudge to all men.

## TRUE NOBILITY.

WHENE'ER a noble deed is wrought,
Whene'er is spoken a noble thought,
Our hearts in glad surprise,
To higher levels rise.

The tidal wave of deeper souls
Into our inmost being rolls,
And lifts us unawares
Out of all meaner cares.

Honour to those whose words or deeds
Thus help us in our daily needs,
And by their overflow
Raise us from what is low.—*Longfellow.*

## XXIII.

## ON THE FRIENDSHIP BETWEEN JONATHAN AND DAVID.

"The soul of Jonathan was knit with the soul of David."—1 *Sam.* xviii. 1.

THE Bible is full of the most beautiful examples of every virtue, and you, my dear young friends, have, no doubt, admired in the Book of Books, the various characters, each of which reveals some special quality, or some noble action.

There is one example which seems to me very beautiful in its combination of human affection, hallowed by divine love. I am alluding to the friendship between Jonathan and David. David, who alone seemed to possess the power of soothing Saul when in his melancholy moods, but who, at the same time, often aroused the King's anger, found a faithful friend, a staunch helper, and a trusted comforter in the son of the very man who persecuted him.

At the risk of exciting his father's anger, Jonathan not only defended his friend in his absence, but saved him from death.

The Bible says: "And the SOUL of Jonathan was knit with the soul of David."

Let us consider the deeper meaning of these words. It strikes me that they convey far more than an ordinary intimation of friendship, for the Bible says the soul of Jonathan. This cannot merely be meant as a common-

place attachment between two young hearts, but the interpretation of these words seems to be that the friendship of Jonathan and David was hallowed by the spirit of God; that their souls were united for a higher aim, and that their affection rested on the firm belief in the Almighty, who watched over them.

Jonathan succeeded in saving David because he trusted, not in the strength of his own friendship alone, but in the help of that omnipotent Father, without whose protection and power we can accomplish nothing. And now, my dear young friends, what lesson can we learn from this touching record of friendship?

No doubt, you all have a friend, or, perhaps, several friends; have you ever considered the duties such friendship entails on us? There is a homely saying: "A friend in need is a friend indeed," and this proverb contains much truth. The object of true friendship is to comfort our friend when he is unhappy, or in want; for even the humblest can be of use to the sorrowing. There is no merit in sharing each other's amusements or in spending our time with our friends when they are merry; we must remember Jonathan, who braved his father's anger to save David, and who took his friend's part in his absence.

Let us, then, follow the example of Saul's son, so far as to sacrifice our own interests and pleasures if required, to help when help is needed—that is real friendship. "And Jonathan stripped himself of the robe that was upon him, and gave it to David, and his garments, even to his sword and to his bow, and to his girdle."—1 Sam. xviii. 4.

It is of the greatest importance that you should be careful in the choice of your friends, for the good friend lifts you up, but the bad one drags you down. You

cannot be much with persons who are unworthy without suffering by their intercourse, and you may easily be led astray by bad example.

We are often surprised and disgusted at first by some actions of our companions, but when they laugh at our scruples, and try to persuade us that they do no wrong, how many of us follow bad advice and join in what we once thought wrong!

This is the danger of associating with bad friends, this the dark side of unholy friendship, and I venture to warn you of following in the footsteps of those who think lightly of duty and virtue.

Remember that Jonathan's soul was knit unto David's, which means that the spirit of God united them, that their friendship was strengthened by faith, that God blessed them, and helped Jonathan to save his friend. Let me, then, urge you, my dear children, to try and emulate the example of Jonathan and David in your friendships, and to remember the words of the former: "The Lord be between me and thee."—1 Sam. xx. 42.

"A love that gives and takes, that seeth faults,
Not with flaw-seeking eyes like needle points,
But loving-kindly ever looks them down
With o'ercoming faith of meek forgiveness."

## HYMN OF SPRING.

PRAISE the Lord, when blushing morning
  Wakes the blossoms fresh with dew!
When the world again created,
  Beams with beauties fair and new.

Praise the Lord, when early breezes
  Come so fragrant from the flowers!
Praise, thou willow by the brook-side;
  Praise, ye birds among the bowers!

Praise the Lord, and may His blessing
  Guide us in the way of truth,
Keep our feet from paths of error,
  Make us holy in our youth.

Praise the Lord, ye hosts of heaven,
  Angels, sing your sweetest lays!
All things utter forth His glory!
  Sound your great Creator's praise.

*Anonymous.*

## XXIV.

## ON WORK.

"And it shall come to pass, if ye shall hearken diligently unto my commandments which I command you this day, to love the Lord your God, and *to serve* him with all your heart and with all your soul, that I will give you the rain of your land in his due season."—*Deut.* xi. 13, 14.

MY DEAR YOUNG FRIENDS,

IT will no doubt surprise you to hear that the subject I have chosen was suggested to me by a child. When I read out the verse which heads my address, a little girl who was listening, inquired: but how can *I serve* the Lord our God? What can I do for Him? This question has, no doubt, presented itself to you, for many of us think that it is difficult, yea, wellnigh impossible to serve the Lord excepting by doing great deeds or making heroic sacrifices.

Full of this belief, we often feel discouraged, and end by doing nothing. Let me, then, try and prove to you that this is a wrong way of considering the matter, and that to serve the Lord our God lies within the power of each of us; that the humblest and the weakest may carry out this precept.

We all of us have our work to do on earth, we have been placed here by an omnipotent, beneficent Father, who assigns to each of us some duty to fulfil, some object to attain. However small that duty may appear to us, if we try our best to carry out the work intrusted to us, we shall be serving God and fulfilling His commands.

Our everyday duties are often the most tiresome and uninteresting, but if we do them with a willing heart, and with a pleasant determination to carry them out well, we shall be doing deeds which in God's sight count quite as much as the heroic actions of some of our fellow-creatures.

In order to bring clearly before you how the humblest among us may be of use in the world, and how often the smallest creature is enabled to help a fellow-sufferer, I will take an example from some very instructive moral tales called: "Æsop's Fables." Æsop, who is supposed to have written these Fables, was a Greek, who lived about 500 years before the present mode of reckoning. Do you know what the word "fable" means? The dictionary tells us "fable" means: an instructive fiction, a tale with a moral to it.

Among Æsop's Fables there is one called "The Lion and the Mouse." The lion, which you know is the king of all animals, was one day caught in a net, and so effectually was he entangled, that he could not extricate himself from his prison. In the hope that help would be at hand, the lion roared for hours, making his powerful voice re-echo through the forest. But in vain! none of his comrades appeared, and the only creature which came near him in his distress was a mouse; strange to say, this was the same mouse which the lion had once allowed to escape unhurt from between his paws. Moved not only by pity, but by gratitude, the mouse determined to save the lion. With its sharp teeth, it set to work to gnaw the net in two, and it gnawed so long that a large opening was made, and, to the great joy of the lion, he suddenly found himself free—all owing to the timely help of the tiny animal, so much inferior to him in size and strength.

And now, can you read the moral of this fable; do you see its bearing on our subject? Æsop shows you very clearly and simply how the humblest can be of use, how the smallest of creatures can not only perform a good action, but help others far more powerful than himself. Remember, then, that however lowly our position may be, however small and weak we are, we can nevertheless accomplish good and useful work for others as well as for ourselves; and by doing this, we best serve the Lord. The smallest daily duty carried out with earnestness, good-will and a cheerful spirit, weighs more in the eyes of Him who "fashioneth our hearts," than the most heroic deeds accomplished only once in a way! Remember, then, that you best serve the Lord your God when you fulfil your duty to Him and your fellow-creatures to the best of your ability, faithfully, patiently, and conscientiously.

A great poet once wrote these lines in the album of a little child:—

> "Small service is true service while it lasts:
> Of humblest friends, bright creature! scorn not one;
> The daisy by the shadow that it casts,
> Protects the lingering dew-drop from the sun."

Before taking leave of you to-day, I again turn to one of the Talmudic explanations of the passage in the Pentateuch, which is quite appropriate to our subject.

In the first chapter of Leviticus you will find that the Lord commanded Moses to tell the children of Israel, that if they were desirous of bringing Him a burnt-offering, this might consist of three different kinds.

The first and foremost was an offering of *cattle;* the second was one of *sheep*, and the third was to be one of young *pigeons.*

Although these offerings were of different value, the last verse of each separate command contains these words: "that it should be a sweet savour unto the Lord."

How do you think the Talmud interprets this repetition?

The three kinds of offering it says, though of different value, are all one in the sight of God, for he does not look to the gift itself, but to the earnestness of the giver, and the spirit in which the offering is made. The Lord considers not whether the sacrifice be great or small, provided it be offered with a loving heart in a humble spirit: "Then it shall be a sweet savour unto the Lord," for whether a man offer much or little to God, it is equally sweet, providing his heart be wholly turned unto his Master.

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## LIFE'S WORK.

ALL around us, fair with flowers,
Fields of beauty sleeping lie;
All around us clarion voices
Call to duty stern and high.

Thankfully we will rejoice in
All the beauty God has given;
But beware it does not win us
From the work ordained of heaven.

Following every voice of mercy
With a trusting, loving heart;
Let us in life's earnest labour
Still be sure to do our part.

Now, to-day, and not to-morrow,
  Let us work with all our might,
Lest the wretched faint and perish
  In the coming stormy night.

Now, to-day, and not to-morrow,
  Lest before to-morrow's sun,
We too, mournfully departing,
  Shall have left our work undone.

*Anonymous.*

## XXV.

## THE FEAST OF PASSOVER.—PART I.

"On the fourteenth day of the first month at even, is the Lord's Passover."—*Lev.* xxiii. 5.

"Seven days ye must eat unleavened bread, even the first day ye shall put away leaven out of your houses."—*Ex.* xii. 15.

TO-DAY, my dear children, we will have a talk about Passover, "the Lord's Passover," as Moses called it.

After Jacob's death a great change set in for the children of Israel. The Israelites, instead of being honoured, valued guests in the land of Egypt, with the most fruitful part given to them for their very own to dwell in, were by degrees reduced to the position of slaves, and nothing can be imagined more unhappy than their condition.

It must have been hard enough for the Israelites to have had to toil in the burning sun on the hot sandy soil under cruel taskmasters for no reward, but in addition to this, their very lives were grudged them. Still God was always with His people, and in spite of all their suffering they multiplied and grew so strong, that the tyrants feared their slaves might become a danger from their very strength and numbers. Then the cruel order went forth that all the male children should be cast into the river as soon as they were born, and only the girls allowed to live. Do you think that true-hearted Jewish women would obey this command? No! a thousand times no! The king's law was no law to these

poor toilers. Pharaoh had taken all that he could from them, but some of God's noblest gifts he could not rob them of, the mother's love, implanted in every woman's heart, was not destroyed, and when the little sons of Israel were born, instead of being flung into the cold waters of the Nile, they were hidden away and cared for, until they could help themselves, and one of these very babies, whom the king would have had drowned, was saved and brought up to deliver his people. This was Moses.

It was not by mere chance that Pharaoh's daughter found the little Israelite among the rushes in the river. Moses had a great part to play in the future of his people, and it was necessary that he should have a better education than his enslaved brothers if he was to be useful to them later on. It was all part of the great scheme of deliverance, that he should find favour in the sight of the princess, that she should adopt him, and in this manner make him fit for his future position as leader of his people. Remember, nothing ever does happen by chance in this world, there is no such thing as chance.

And now you will agree with me that it was not an accident that led the powerful Egyptian princess to the little floating cradle, where the sight of the forsaken weeping infant touched her woman's heart, nor was it chance that the child's own mother was called to nurse him. Jochebed, Moses' mother, played her part too in bringing up the child to know God, and from her he learnt that he belonged to the enslaved race, although he was free through the favour of the royal lady who had adopted him. How strong and true was his love for his people is shown by his acts when he grew to manhood. When walking out one day, he saw a poor Israelite being ill-treated by an Egyptian; without

stopping to think of the consequences of his interference, he went to his assistance and overpowered the Egyptian.

These events, insignificant as they may seem, led to the second stage in Moses' life. He had to fly from Egypt, as he thought the king would punish him, perhaps with death, for having taken the law into his own hands. So he fled from Egypt, and found refuge in the land of Midian with a priest named Jethro. Here he led a happy pastoral life, for the priest had seven daughters, who were shepherdesses, and they gladly welcomed the polite, good-natured stranger, who at their very first meeting befriended them. These young Midianitish maidens were being very rudely treated by the shepherds, when Moses appeared and came to their assistance and watered their flocks.

See now, how a kind act benefits not only the person to whom it is done, but also him who does it, not that good should be done for the sake of a reward, still, sometimes when we are striving very hard to do good in spite of opposition, or at all events, with no assistance from those around us, we may find comfort and strength in the following beautiful verse from Ecclesiastes :—

" Cast thy bread upon the waters, for thou shalt find it after many days."

And now it was Moses' kind heart that drew him to the weak side, and, fortunately for him, his reward came at once. When Jethro heard of his conduct, he offered the young stranger a home, and afterwards gave him one of his daughters for a wife. This part of Moses' career was an important one. Living now the life of a shepherd, his time spent among the beauties and wonders of nature, communing with God through His works, his powers of patience and

love were being strengthened, the shepherd of sheep was fitting himself to become by-and-by the shepherd of men. Moses, who tended the flocks of his father-in-law, was preparing for his future work of tending the bodies and souls of the Israelites, when through him they should be freed from the Egyptian bondage. This must have been the happiest period of Moses' life, the peaceful years spent among the green hills bordering the deserts of Arabia.

Presently God appeared to him from out of the burning bush, and told him he must leave his peaceful shepherd's work, and go back to Egypt. His elder brother Aaron would meet him on the way, and then they were to tell the Israelites that their years of slavery were coming to an end, and that he was going before the king to demand their freedom.

Here closes the peaceful chapter of Moses' life; now we shall hear of him as God's ambassador, not at first welcome even to his own people. They had sunk into such a miserable, degraded condition from their cruel slavery, that they feared that Moses' interference might only make matters worse. They had so long bid farewell to hope, that they even doubted the truth of his words. Only when they saw the miracles he performed with the rod he carried in his hand, could they believe that he and Aaron were really sent by God with the encouraging message.

The tyrant king was not to be so easily induced to follow God's word, his heart was hard, and stronger measures were needed before he would consent to let those useful, patient bondmen go, and so the dreadful time of the plagues began. Ten different plagues, each fresh one more terrible than the last, were brought on the Egyptians. Their comfort, their appetites, their wealth, their affec-

tions, each in turn was attacked, but it was not until the dread angel of Death stalked amongst them that the proud, hard heart was forced to give way.

After the plague of the three days' darkness had been removed, Moses called to the people and told them that the time was at hand for their enemies to let them go, and they were to prepare for their departure. Now was to be celebrated the first Passover. God was going to slay the first-born of all throughout the land of Egypt, both man and beast, "from the first-born of Pharaoh that sat on his throne unto the first-born of the captive that was in the dungeon."—Exodus, xii. 29.

None would be spared, nobles and slaves, all would weep and mourn together. And whilst all this would be happening throughout that part of the land where the Egyptians lived by themselves, a very different picture would be seen in Goshen, where the children of Israel dwelt. There the first Passover was being held. God had commanded through Moses, that every family should take a lamb, large or small according to the size of the household, and if the family was too small to eat a whole lamb, then two neighbours might join together. This lamb was to be killed and eaten at even, and bunches of the herb hyssop were to be dipped in the blood, which was to be sprinkled on the door-posts, so that the destroying angel might know which houses he was to pass by and not enter.

What a strange command this must appear to you at first sight, but now let us look into it and see what it meant. Would God's messenger, without that sign to guide him, have entered and struck down by mistake some of the first-born of Israel? Surely, you know better than that. It was a trial of faith, a means of proving their obedience. You, my dear children, can

take a lesson to yourselves from this. It is not for you to question the injunctions of your parents or elders; you must have faith enough in their love and superior wisdom to obey them without hesitating. Listen to the words of the wise and great Solomon.

"My son, hear the instruction of thy father, and forsake not the law of thy mother."—Proverbs, i. 8.

So the Israelites hearkened to Moses, and when the terrible tenth plague was raging in Egypt, when the angel smote "from the first-born of Pharaoh that sat on his throne, unto the first-born of the captive that was in the prison," each Israelite family was eating the Passover or paschal lamb, not sitting down to a comfortable meal, but eating in haste, ready to start for their journey, with their "loins girded" and their newly-made bread on their backs, to be baked in the sun as they should travel along. Then there arose a mighty wail of sorrow throughout the land of Egypt. Moses and Aaron were called for in the midst of the night. "Rise and get you forth from among my people, you and all the children of Israel, and take all that belongs to you." And the Egyptians hurried them off, giving them all they asked for in order to get rid of them, for they said, "We are all dead men."

I would like you to notice how this terrible tenth plague must have struck even Pharaoh's hardened heart as a just retribution. Even as *he* had tried to kill the innocent little children of guiltless parents, so now the parents were bereaved of *their* cherished ones. Verily his sins had found him out.

Was not this a wonderful change for the children of Israel! The poor slaves, who up to this time had been over-worked and ill-treated in every possible way, had

now become a terror to their former masters, and were begged to depart as quickly as they could.

You can imagine that they did not need much urging to get away from the hated land of the Pharaohs, and with Moses and Aaron at their head, in the dead of night, they began their march out of Egypt. "Six hundred thousand that were men besides children."

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"When Israel of the Lord beloved,
Out from the land of bondage came,
Her fathers' God before her moved,
An awful guide, in cloud and flame.

Thus present still, though now unseen,
When brightly shines the prosperous day,
Be thoughts of Thee a cloudy screen,
To temper the deceitful ray!

And O, when gathers on our path
In shade and storm the frequent night,
Be Thou, long-suffering, slow to wrath,
A burning and a shining light!"

*Sir Walter Scott.*

## XXVI.

## THE FEAST OF PASSOVER.—PART II.

WELL, now that you have heard all about the first Passover and the events that happened before it, I scarcely need ask you why we keep the feast each year. If anyone were to ask you why you eat unleavened bread during that week, I hope I should not hear you say, "Oh, because our ancestors, when they were brought out of Egypt, had not time to get their bread properly baked, so that it was not *fermented* or *leavened*, and in memory of that, we are told not to eat anything that *is* leavened for seven days." This would only be a very small portion of the truth. Moses commanded the Israelites then and for ever, throughout all ages, to observe the Feast of Passover, as a memorial of God's great deliverance of His people from the Egyptian slavery.

Who can tell me how, besides not eating anything leavened for seven days, we commemorate the first Passover?

What special service do we hold on the night the feast begins?

Of course, you all know that I mean the "Seder," and a very pretty service it is, when all the members of a family meet together, having perhaps, some of them, been separated for many a long day. When we sit down to take part in it, we ought to picture to ourselves, how so many thousand years ago, our ancestors were at their meal eating the paschal lamb, the blood of which had

been sprinkled on the door-posts with bunches of the herb hyssop dipped in it. They were not seated comfortably as we are now, but they stood, eating it in haste, ready dressed for the journey they knew not whither, staff in hand and sandals on their feet.

On the first night of the feast of Passover we read a service from a little book called the "Hagadah." This Hagadah contains the history of all that concerns the Passover, therefore, of the slavery in Egypt, the punishment of Pharaoh and his people, and the mighty saving of our ancestors, and we sing from it Psalms and songs of praise and joy to God.

First, I will tell you how our table is laid for this special Seder service. On it we place some matzah or unleavened bread, a roasted lamb bone and an egg, various sweet and bitter herbs, some salt and water, a sweet mixture called charoseth, and some wine.

Each of these things placed on the table has its meaning, as I hope you know, for no ceremonial should be observed without your inquiring the why and the wherefore, for intelligent obedience in religion is required of us. Why the Matzos are on the table, you will, of course, not need telling. The lamb bone is a memorial of the paschal lamb that each family was to kill and eat on the eve of the Passover. The egg also roasted with fire is a memorial of a special Passover offering, which was made yearly until after the destruction of the Temple. The salt and water, bitter herbs, and the charoseth are only symbols or tokens of the cruel hardships endured by the Israelites before their deliverance came. The wine is for the kiddush or sanctification, which in Jewish households should mark the beginning of the Sabbath or holydays.

I do not think a more suitable way could have been

found for commencing this sacred and important Festival, than for all the members of a family to meet and read together the wonderful story of the Passover, the table laid with all the emblems of the first celebration, and surely no fairy-tale could be more marvellous or interesting. And there is another advantage, it seems to me, to be obtained by the observance of this pretty old custom over and beyond the religious part of it. The Seder night helps to strengthen the bond of family love, in bringing together as it does, the perhaps scattered members of a household, some of whom may during the past year not have felt too kindly towards each other, and are now glad to take this opportunity of making friends again.

The service begins with a blessing in which we thank God for His having guarded and cared for us during the past year, and various other blessings are said as we taste each of the different things placed on the table.

Then the youngest of the party asks the all important question beginning מַה נִּשְׁתַּנָּה, "Why is this night to be distinguished from all other nights? Why do we to-night dip the herbs and eat the unleavened bread, and sit at our ease?"

To remind us of the great redemption from Egypt, and note the words of the reply. "If the Most High, blessed be He, had not brought forth our ancestors from Egypt, then we and our children and our children's children would still have been slaves in Egypt."

After this we read short sketches of Abraham and Jacob, and then follows the whole story, or Hagadah of the sojourn in Egypt, the slavery there, and then how, amidst signs and wonders, "with a strong hand and an outstretched arm," God led His people forth to

freedom and—their own land, the promised land of Canaan.

To show our gratitude to God we recite the beautiful Psalms, which form the Hallel (or praise) beginning, as I hope you all know, with the words "Hallelujah, praise ye the Lord." Then after taking, what I dare say you children consider the nicest thing on the table, the sweet charoseth, the evening meal begins, and after the grace has been said, more psalms are recited and different rhymes are sung, which have been composed at various times in honour of the Festival. As long as the Temple stood, the yearly custom of eating the Passover lamb was strictly observed, but when the people were carried into captivity by Nebuchadnezzar, some changes necessarily took place. Some portions of the Hagadah are written in Chaldean, a language that the Jews learnt from their captors and got into the habit of using. Different rabbis at later periods added portions to the service until it reached its present form some hundreds of years ago.

It is generally believed that "Sabbath Haggadol" is so called because it was on that day, the 10th of Nissan, that the command came to the people to take the paschal lamb, which was to be eaten on the evening of the 14th. We look upon this Sabbath as a very sacred one. I want you to note what an important fact in our history, the deliverance from Egypt was. It did not only mean the release of so many slaves from a hard and trying life, but that from this moment, Israel became a nation. For the first time in the history of the Israelitish people, they were to take up their position as God's nation, to receive the great gift of His law, which they were to spread not only by word of mouth, but by example among the other peoples of the earth.

I wonder if any of those whom I am addressing to-day are slaves! "What a funny idea," you may say to yourselves, "There are no slaves in free England." I am sorry to say that there are. When we give way to angry passions and mean, dishonourable deeds, then we are slaves of the worst kind. Happily, this is not a hopeless slavery, as its continuance depends upon ourselves. If we will only resolve to fight the bad spirit within us, we can conquer and be free. Here is work for each of you to do. Let the Feast of Passover not only be a memorial of the deliverance from the old slavery, but let it mark each year a victory gained by you over some bad or vicious habit. If you can feel you have done this, then you will indeed have laid an offering on God's altar, perhaps more acceptable even than the paschal lamb, which was ordered to be slain as a test of faith and obedience on the first Passover.

I would like you to learn by heart these two texts:

"He that is slow to anger is better than the mighty, and he *that ruleth his spirit* than he that taketh a city."—Prov. xvi. 32.

"The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, Thou wilt not despise."—Ps. li. 17.

You must not think that because we are scattered abroad among all the different peoples of the world, and have now no land of our own, that our mission is ended, and that we have no part to play in the world's history. Such is not the case. Although we are but a remnant—a tiny portion of the people amongst whom we live—as Jews we are always more or less marked an עַם סְגֻלָּה. God said we should be a nation of priests, surely then we ought to be conspicuous by the purity of our lives. Everyone, however humble his or

her position in life may be, can work with this object in view. When you go out into the world, never forget that you are each a part, however small, of one great whole, the Jewish people—for one instant we will compare Israel to a noble archway or bridge. We, each and all, are the innumerable bricks that compose it. Suppose that one rotten or defective brick has by accident been used in the construction of the work. This may affect the safety of the whole—one bad brick may cause it all to loosen and become unsafe. Can you see my meaning? I want no imperfect units in the Jewish whole, but that you shall each grow into good reliable men and women, so that you may help to fulfil God's words, and become a nation of priests, spreading the knowledge of God among the nations far and near.

And now, my dear children, before we finish our talk to-day, one word more. You would be horrified, most of you, if your homes were not cleansed of all that is impure, or leavened for Passover, so I beg of you not to neglect the duty of removing all moral leaven. Do you understand what I mean by this? Let your hearts be in keeping with your homes, cleansed and purified for "the Lord's Passover."

## A HYMN.

O GOD, by whom the seed is given,
  By whom the harvest blest;
Whose word like manna showered from heaven,
  Is planted in our breast.

Preserve it from the passing feet,
  And plunderers of the air;
The sultry sun's intenser heat,
  And weeds of worldly care.

Tho' buried deep or thinly strewn,
  Do Thou Thy grace supply;
The hope in earthly furrows sown
  Shall ripen in the sky.—*R. Heber.*

## XXVII.

## PENTECOST.

"And thou shalt observe the feast of weeks of the first-fruits of wheat harvest."—*Exodus*, xxxiv. 22.

MY DEAR CHILDREN,

TO-DAY we will have a talk about Pentecost or Feast of Weeks. Pentecost is one of the three great festivals, the שָׁלֹשׁ רְגָלִים as they are called. These are Passover Pentecost, and Tabernacles. On these holydays, after the Israelites were living in their own land, all those who could possibly leave their homes went up to the Tabernacle, and after the Temple was built, they journeyed up to Jerusalem to lay their offerings on God's altar.

The feast of שָׁבֻעוֹת or Weeks, is so called for the following reason:

Moses told the Israelites they were to count seven weeks from Passover, and were then to bring an offering to God of some of the first ripe fruits of their corn. The grain begins to ripen much earlier in sunny Palestine than it does in our country, where the spring is so chilly. This counting of the days for seven whole weeks is called the counting of the omer.

An omer of new barley, a measure equal to five pints, was always brought as an offering upon the second day of Passover, from which period the counting of forty-nine days began—the fiftieth day being the Feast of

Weeks or *Pentecost*—this second name Pentecost being taken from the Greek word fifty. This feast was to remind the people of Israel of the Giver of all, and that no man should receive God's gracious gifts without showing some gratitude.

Each would naturally feel a desire to make some return to the Lord, from whom came all good things, and so in kind and loving thoughtfulness our Father told them they might all come and lay some of their possessions before Him.

It was not to be expected or wished that every man should bring an offering of the same value, but each "according to his ability," was to appear before the Lord with his gift taken from his field, or from his vineyard.

How happy they must have felt as they came trooping to the Tabernacle, or later on to the Temple, every man with his offering—it must have made him feel nearer to God. You know what a pleasure it is to any of you, if you can do something for your parents or anyone else who has been very kind to you. I am sure you are delighted if you can bring them some little gift, and so it was in the old Bible times. The poor man, who could only afford the small omer of wheat or barley, was as acceptable in God's sight as the rich one, who brought the finest beasts from his herds in addition to the offering of corn.

God does not measure the worth of what we give Him, He only considers the feeling with which we offer it. And never forget, that although there are now no altars or officiating priests, we can still bring God our daily offerings. The little kindnesses we show to each other, and the little acts of unselfishness that we perform are welcome sacrifices to God.

There is another reason why we keep the Feast of

Weeks. It is not only to commemorate the early harvest festival, but also the giving of the Law on Mount Sinai, which took place seven weeks after the Israelites left Egypt. On the 6th of Sivan, just seven weeks after the great redemption from Egypt, a wondrous sight presented itself at Sinai. The vast multitude of Israelites, men, women, and children, were grouped at the foot of the mount, bounds having been set by Moses lest any should presume to approach too near to where God was about to appear. As for Sinai itself, it was shrouded in smoke and shook, whilst amid thunder and lightning the trumpet sounded. Then God spake to Moses, whom He called to Him, proclaiming the Ten Commandments, which, as you no doubt know, are always read impressively during the morning service on Pentecost.

The people were so terrified at God's mighty presence, that they said to Moses: "Speak thou with us and we will hear; but let not God speak with us, lest we die."—Ex. xx. 19.

After this Moses left the people, and was lost to their sight in the thick darkness with God. Forty days and forty nights did Moses remain on the mount, before he descended to the anxiously expectant people. With what grateful feelings should our hearts be filled on this holy Day of Pentecost, when we received the noble gift of the Law. The laws of Moses are more just, more merciful, and better fitted to promote virtue and happiness than those framed by any other nation of antiquity, and they have served as the foundation for every other code of laws, made at different periods by all other civilized nations of the world. Universal love was enjoined, as we read in the following verses: "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." "Thou shalt not vex the stranger."

Indeed, the Mosaic observances are full of every sort of loving-kindness. When the harvest was being gathered in, whether it was corn, or grapes, or olives, some of it was always to be left for the poor. "The stranger, the fatherless, and the widow," were to have their share.

It is true that we are no longer an agricultural people, with our oliveyards and vineyards, but still this law comes home to us, for it means, surely, that we must not be grasping or selfish, but ready to spare of our plenty to those who are less blessed with the goods of this world. Listen also to the following kind law. A newly married man was to be left at home for a year; he could not be called upon to go out and fight if there was war, nor to take part in any business away from his home; he was "to cheer up the wife that he had taken." Am I not right in describing this as a merciful law?

Then I want you to notice how God made laws for the benefit of poor dumb animals—kindness to them was strictly commanded. I will give you an example of this. The ox and the ass were not to be yoked together to labour in the fields. Can you tell me why?

Even the little birds were not forgotten—laws were made to protect them—so if you should be tempted to act cruelly to our dumb friends, and I am sorry to say I have seen children thoughtlessly ill-treat them, stay your hand and think how you are going to break God's law.

There is a great deal written and said nowadays about the laws of health, but I firmly believe we should never go wrong if we followed those laid down by Moses. Bathing was ordered, but I am afraid the value of cold water, and *plenty of it inside and outside our bodies* is not half enough appreciated by you. After light

and air, I should name water as God's most precious and necessary gift to us. Notice how often the priests washed and changed their garments, and let us take an example from them. Then the laws about food. They were principally made with the same object—to keep us in health, by avoiding what was unwholesome. It would take days, and not hours, to tell you of all the beneficent laws which have been given to us by God. But I think you have heard enough to convince you of the use and beauty of this Festival of Pentecost, which ought to draw us near to God.

God loves little children; you are the flowers in His kingdom; He created you pure to bring sunshine and gladness into your homes, and you can do this by the sweetness of your disposition, and your loving obedience to your parents. Tell me what short book of the Bible forms part of the Pentecost service. Ruth is chosen because the principal part of her story takes place at the harvest time. Her affection and gentleness, her unselfishness and pure-minded simplicity, go to the making of a character which you may all try to imitate. We will finish with a beautiful verse of the wise King Solomon's:

"Every word of God is pure; he is a shield unto them that put their trust in him."—Prov. xxx. 5.

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"Praise, and thanks, and cheerful love,
Rise from every thing below,
To the mighty One above,
Who His wondrous love doth show.
Praise Him each created thing,
God, your Father, God of Spring!

Praise Him, trees so lately bare,
  Praise Him, fresh and new-born flowers;
All ye creatures of the air,
  All ye soft descending showers.
Praise, with each awakening thing,
Praise your maker, God of Spring!

Praise him man, thy fitful heart,
  Let this balmy season move,
To employ its nobler part,
  Softest mercy, sweetest love,
Blessing with each living thing,
God the bounteous—God of Spring!"—*Anon.*

## XXVIII.

## THE FAST OF THE NINTH OF AB.

"For the Lord will not cast off for ever; But though he cause grief, yet will he have compassion, according to the multitude of his mercies."—*Lam.* iii. 31-32.

MY DEAR CHILDREN,

I MEAN to-day to tell you the story of the fast of the ninth of Ab. It recalls the saddest period in our national history, for it commemorates the destruction of Jerusalem and of our beautiful Temple. I hope that I need not remind any of you how this holy house of God was built by the wise king Solomon. It had been David's pious wish to erect the Temple, but by God's desire, the work was to be left to his son Solomon. So the Temple was built and dedicated by Solomon, and it had stood in all its beauty for four or five hundred years until the reign of Zedekiah, the last king of Judah. In his time, the people had become so sinful—so idolatrous—so ungrateful to God for all His loving care, that He forsook them, and when Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, came up against Jerusalem, God allowed the holy city to fall into the stranger's hands.

I should make you very sad were I to tell you of half the misery the Jews endured during the siege of Jerusalem. The siege lasted for eighteen months. Perhaps you do not know what a siege means. It is this—let us

imagine that an army comes marching up to take possession of a city, the soldiers surround it on every side, no one is able to go in or out of the gates, unless he be prepared to fight his way through the enemy. At the end of eighteen months the people within the walls were so weakened by hunger and disease that they could no longer fight against the enemy, and the Babylonians were able to pour their hosts into the devoted city. Now began a terrible time; men, women, and children were slaughtered. Even those who had taken shelter in the Temple were slain, for nothing was sacred in the eyes of the invader. The walls of the city were destroyed and the city was burned down. But the crowning point of misery was reached, when, by Nebuchadnezzar's command, the holy house itself was set fire to and burnt without pity. The conquerors only took care to save the beautiful golden vessels; these were seized and carried to Babylon to grace the royal palace. Zedekiah the king was taken captive but not slain, death would have been kinder than the cruel fate that was in store for him. His sons were killed in his sight, and then his eyes were put out, and he was taken as a prisoner to Babylon with the best and noblest of his people, only the very poor being left behind to till the ground.

Gedaliah, who was made governor of the land, lived at the same time as the great prophet Jeremiah. Jeremiah, a devoted servant of God, first began to preach God's word in the reign of the good king Josiah, some forty years before the destruction of Jerusalem. He grieved to see the idolatrous wickedness of his countrymen, how "they mocked the messengers of God, and despised His words, and misused His prophets" (2 Chron. xxxvi. 16), and he never tired of reproving them for their sins, and of foretelling their fate

if they did not mend their ways. This was not a pleasant duty, and Jeremiah had to pay heavily for the performance of it. Still, he was too earnest and honest to hold his peace. He did not flinch from preaching the truth even in the king's palace, and his immediate reward was a prison.

See how steadfast Jeremiah was in the fulfilment of his duty, he had but to speak pleasant words and to keep back the truth, and the doors of his prison would have been opened, and he would have regained his freedom; but this he would not do, and there he remained, until Zedekiah's conscience smote him and he released the prophet.

Strange to say, the noble character of the Jewish prophet was more appreciated by the foreign conqueror Nebuchadnezzar than by his own countrymen. When Jerusalem fell and the people of Palestine were led captive into Babylon, Jeremiah was offered his choice whether he would dwell in Babylon as an honoured guest of the king, or remain behind among his own people in Judæa. You can easily guess Jeremiah's decision. Promotion and ease would not weigh in the scale against the welfare of his poor suffering brethren. If they had needed his words before, how much more necessary were they now.

It was Jeremiah who wrote the beautiful book in the Bible called "Lamentations." These Lamentations are always read in Synagogue on the evening of the ninth of Ab, and those of you who are unable to attend this service should always read those chapters at home. Can we not in some measure realize what the prophet's feelings must have been! He had indeed the load of a double sorrow to bear, he had foreseen the troubles coming on his fellow-countrymen, and at the risk of his own life, he had over and over again warned and repri-

manded both the king and the people. Picture to yourself Jeremiah's grief at finding his earnest words of no avail, and when the fatal end came and he saw Zedekiah, the weak irresolute king, dethroned and blinded—his brethren butchered by thousands—Jerusalem taken, and the holy Temple destroyed, he had but the one consolation—he had done his duty bravely and faithfully.

We can feel something of his despair as we read his words in the Lamentations. How mournful and poetical is this description of Jerusalem:

"How doth the city sit desolate that was full of people! how is she become as a widow! she that was great among the nations, a princess among the provinces; how is she become tributary. Behold and see if there be any sorrow like unto my sorrow."

When you think of what this destruction of Jerusalem meant for Israel, you will say that there is quite enough to make the Fast of Ab a day of humiliation. After the seventy years' captivity, although the Jews returned to Judæa and built a second Temple, they never regained their old position as a nation. It was, in a measure, their tributary condition that led to the troubles which brought about the destruction of the second Temple. This, you must know, also took place on the ninth of Ab. At this time the Jews were under the dominion of the Romans, and, in fact, Judæa was called a Roman province. Their condition was a very miserable one, so how could they take kindly to their foreign masters? At last their discontent burst into open rebellion, and for a time the Jewish soldiers gained some slight victories, for they fought with extraordinary bravery against the Roman armies that were sent to subdue them. However, the struggle was too unequal. There were no better trained soldiers or finer commanders in the world than

the Romans. They far out-numbered the Jewish bands of armed men that met them in battle; one victory over the Jews followed upon another; one fortified city fell after another, until, at last, the Roman general Titus pursued the unfortunate people to their one remaining stronghold—Jerusalem.

Now was repeated the sad, sad story of the earlier siege, and the destruction of the first Temple by the Babylonian king. The glorious second Temple, which had been built by loving, skilful hands, was doomed. I told you that the Roman general Titus besieged Jerusalem. After a brave, determined resistance of many months, in the fifth month, the fatal month of Ab, Jerusalem, its garrison reduced by disease and hunger, could hold out no longer, and thus Titus became master of the holy place. The Temple he would willingly have spared, but his soldiers were so enraged by the long and brave resistance the besieged had offered them, that he was powerless to control their fury. They slaughtered all the Jews who came in their way, and a Roman soldier having thrown a lighted torch into the Temple, it was burnt to the ground, in spite of Titus' efforts to save it from destruction.

Yet another national trouble took place on this same ill-fated day, the ninth of Ab. Fifty years later 600,000 Jews were slain at the siege of a town, Bether. This was the end of the last revolt of the Jews against their Roman masters. Their leader in this rebellion was a man named "Bar Cochba," which means, "son of the star." He had announced himself as the promised Messiah, and the people, believing in his being a messenger of the Lord, flocked to his standard.

But when one defeat followed upon another, they felt they had been deceived—Bar Cochba was an impostor

—they had been leaning on a broken reed, and in their disappointed rage they changed his name to "Bar Cosiba," or "son of a lie." Hadrian was the Roman Emperor at that time, and he sent one of his bravest generals to Judæa, with orders to crush the rebellion at any cost. His commands were faithfully obeyed. The impostor was killed in a battle, and a general massacre followed, neither age nor sex was spared, and, as I told you, at the siege of Bether, on the ninth of Ab, 600,000 Jews were slain.

This was not all. An altar was set up on the holy spot where the Temple once stood, and the people were forbidden to practise the rites and ceremonies of their religion. From this date begins the actual dispersion of the Jews.

There is one singular fact I want you to notice in connection with the Fast of Ab. In the history of different nations we find them celebrating their past victories, but we do not read that they commemorated their defeats or past troubles. We English rejoice yearly at the recollection of the victories of Waterloo and Trafalgar, but our misfortunes in other campaigns are put aside and buried.

The Jews had a double reason for appointing these and other similar fast days. First, the recollection of past sins, and the consequences which they entailed, would, it was hoped, lead to a higher standard of conduct in the future; secondly, our rabbis and wise men intended that those days should act as a check against the over-elation of our people when in a too prosperous condition.

"King of kings, and Lord of lords!
Thus we move our sad steps timing
To our cymbals' feeblest chiming,
Where Thy house its rest accords.
Chased and wounded birds are we,
Through the dark air fled to Thee;
To the shadow of Thy wings,
Lord of lords, and King of kings!

Behold, O Lord, the heathen tread
The branches of Thy fruitful vine,
That in luxurious tendrils spread
O'er all the hills of Palestine.
And now the wild boar comes to waste
Even us, the greenest boughs and last,
That drinking of Thy choicest dew,
On Zion's hill in beauty grew.

No! by the marvels of Thine hand,
Thou still wilt save Thy chosen band,
By all Thine ancient mercies shown,
By all our Father's foes o'erthrown,
By the Egyptian's car-borne host
Scatter'd on the Red Sea coast.
By that wide and bloodless slaughter
Underneath the drowning water.

Like us, in utter hopelessness,
In their last and worst distress,
On the sand and sea-weed lying,
Israel poured her doleful sighing;

While before the deep sea flowed,
And behind fierce Egypt rode—
To their father's God they prayed,
To the Lord of Hosts for aid.

Then the light of morning lay
On the wonder-pavèd way,
Where the treasures of the deep
In their caves of coral sleep,
The profound abysses, where
Was never sound from upper air,
Rang with Israel's chanted words,
King of kings, and Lord of lords!

Then did Israel's maidens sing,
Then did Israel's timbrels ring
To Him, the King of kings, that in the sea
The Lord of lords had triumphed gloriously."

*H. M. Milman* (*The Fall of Jerusalem*).

## XXIX.

## THE NEW YEAR.

DEAR CHILDREN,

IT is about the beautiful festival of the New Year that I will speak to you to-day.

Listen to the words of Moses, when he commanded its observance to the children of Israel.

"And in the seventh month, on the first day of the month, ye shall have a holy convocation; ye shall do no servile work: it is a day of blowing the trumpet unto you, it is a feast of the Lord."—Num. xxix. 1.

First of all, let us understand the words of the text. I wonder if any of you are puzzled at finding the *new year* which, as its very name implies, is the beginning of another year, celebrated in the seventh month? You will, I hope, remember what I told you about Passover —that the month Nissan, which until the delivery from Egypt, had always been counted as the seventh month, was from that time to be "the first of months," and so Tishri must henceforth be counted as the seventh month in the year.

This is how we will define it: the first of Tishri is the date of our "civil" new year and the fifteenth of Nissan of our "religious" one. רֹאשׁ הַשָּׁנָה, the head of the year, is not kept in memory of any national event like some of our holidays, but it is ordained to commemorate the great work of the Creation. In simple words, the New Year is the world's birthday.

Now what feelings should this day awaken in our hearts?

First, gratitude towards our Father in Heaven for having made the world so beautiful, and then a worthy ambition to improve ourselves, to strive that each succeeding year may find us morally and intellectually advanced.

A birthday must always be a serious, as well as a joyous occasion. If we thank God for letting us live and complete another year, we must also pause to reflect whether we have put that year to some good account, whether there has been:

"Something attempted, something done."

If we are anxious to improve and see some sure result of our life's work, we should not only make good resolutions as the year's birthday comes round, but try hard to keep them.

The New Year is known by several other names; it is called:

יוֹם הַזִּכָּרוֹן, יוֹם הַדִּין, יוֹם תְּרוּעָה,

Let us take each in turn and study its meaning in relation to the day.

יוֹם הַזִּכָּרוֹן from זָכַר remember, to the day of remembrance or memorial. First, it should remind us of the creation of the world, and then of our own resolutions and conduct.

We read this beautiful passage in our prayers on the morning of the New Year:

"This day the world was called into existence, this day He causeth all the creatures of the Universe to stand in judgment, either as children or as servants. If we are as children, then do Thou have mercy upon us, even as a father hath mercy on his children, or if we stand as servants, our eyes are attentively fixed on Thee until Thou

wilt be gracious unto us and judge us favourably, oh, Thou who art tremendous and holy."

Next we come to the term יוֹם הַדִּין a day of judgment, from דִּין to judge. Now there is an old tradition of our rabbis, that from the first day of Tishri, until the tenth, which is the day of Atonement, the books in which God has written down all our good and bad deeds of the past year, are kept open.

During these ten days, which are called the penitential days, so says the tradition, our fate is uncertain. We are being weighed in the balance, and if, like Belshazzar, we are "found wanting," we have to try, with all our might, by firm resolutions and better deeds, to be inscribed in the following year, in the good book. The prophet Malachi writes of this book of remembrance: "Then they that feared the Lord spake often one to another and the Lord hearkened and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before him for them that feared the Lord and that thought upon his name."—Mal. iii. 16.

Remember, it is never too late to repent. God will welcome back the penitent sinner and inscribe him in the good book, if his penitence be a real and true one. God will help us to make our repentance a real one, He will cleanse our heart, strengthen our will, and protect us from the many evil influences that are around us. He will arouse our slumbering conscience, and refresh our failing memory, so that we may hear His voice and return to some of the old teaching given us by our parents and teachers. Tradition tells us, that the evil sentence, about to be inscribed in the bad book, can be averted by Penitence, Prayer, and Charity.

There is very much to be said about these three words. They would take a whole morning to explain properly.

Let us try and see if we can summarize their meaning for to-day.

By penitence we mean: regret for our past sin; by prayer, the expression of our hearts addressed to our Heavenly Father that we may not fall into the same sin again; by Charity, an act of love towards our fellow-creatures—enhanced perhaps by some self-sacrifice on our part. The ten penitential days, whilst, according to tradition, our actions are being judged and weighed, are to prepare us for the great Day of Atonement.

In the olden times the Holy of Holies, or the Sanctuary of the Temple could only be approached by a vestibule, so we will call these penitential days, the vestibule or passage to יוֹם כִּפּוּר.

The third name which is given to the New Year is יוֹם תְּרוּעָה, the day of blowing the trumpet. As you all know, the Shofar or horn is blown on this day in our synagogues. A ram's horn being selected, to remind us of Isaac's willing submission to his father, when a ram "caught in the thicket" was accepted as a sacrifice in place of the obedient son.

I will tell you some of the reasons which the prayer book gives us for blowing the horn.

1. As it is the custom at the coronation or crowning of kings to sound the trumpet, so do we on the New Year in memorial of the creation and of the sovereignty of God sound the shofar.

2. As the New Year is the first of the ten penitential days, we sound the trumpet to entreat all to return to God and to repent of their sins. Its thrilling sound is the earthly call to penitence, that is given us.

3. The Shofar is blown to remind us of our law given on Mount Sinai, for we read of that event, that the voice of the cornet was exceeding loud. So when we hear

the Shofar, let us remember the words of the multitudes assembled round the Mount: "All that the Lord hath spoken, we will do."—Ex. xix. 8.

Let us make a promise to ourselves, to try and keep God's Commandments.

4. The Shofar or ram's horn is blown also to remind us of the sacrifice that was demanded of Abraham, even that of his only son.

Children, listen to the blast of the Shofar with reverent attention, and try to spend the ten penitential days in such a manner that the great festival of the Atonement may help you each succeeding year to lead a holier and a nobler life.

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## CLOSE OF THE YEAR.

O GOD! to thee our hearts would pay
  Their gratitude sincere,
Whose love hath kept us night and day,
  Throughout another year.

Of every breath. and every power,
  Thou wast the gracious source,
From Thee came every happy hour
  Which smiled along its course.

And if sometimes across our path
A cloud its shadows threw,
Thou didst not waft it there in wrath,
But loving kindness true.

For joy and grief alike we pay
Our thanks to Thee above;
And only pray to grow each day
More worthy of Thy love.—*Gaskell.*

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"TAKE thy New Year with thanksgiving,
Fear not aught it may disclose,
For it holds not joy or sorrow
Other than thy Father chose;
And His Love secures to thee
Fairer choice than thine could be."—*Anon.*

## XXX.

## THE FAST OF GEDALIAH.

MY DEAR CHILDREN,

OUR subject to-day is the fast of Gedaliah. It is one of our minor, that is, lesser holydays, and only observed by some of our people; still, because the man in whose honour and memory it is kept, is one of the finest characters in our national history, it is a day that should be remembered.

We will go back to the time when the first Temple—Solomon's Temple, was destroyed. When Nebuchadnezzar had conquered Jerusalem, and had carried away captive to Babylon the King Zedekiah and all the principal people, there was still left in the land a number of poor Jews. This was wise policy on Nebuchadnezzar's part, for if all the Jews had been driven away, then the beautiful land of Palestine would have become a waste, as there would have been none left to cultivate it. So the Babylonian king thought that the best plan would be to appoint a governor, and he chose for this post a good, honest, noble-minded Jew, named Gedaliah. A better selection could not have been made. Gedaliah was a true patriot. He knew that all the troubles had come on his nation as a punishment from God. They were the fulfilment of the disregarded warnings of the prophets, and so, when he accepted from Nebuchadnezzar the office of Governor of the Holy Land, he firmly resolved to try and make his countrymen submit to their foreign ruler. Listen to his words:—

"Fear not to serve the Chaldeans, dwell in the land and serve the King of Babylon and it shall be well with you."—Jer. xl. 9.

The advice which Gedaliah gave to our brethren of old, applies equally well to us in modern times. In whatever country we may happen to be living, we must make up our minds to serve the king loyally, and to follow the laws of the land.

The people saw how wise and good was Gedaliah's advice, and they set to work to till the land, well content to pay their share of the tribute and to dwell once more in peace. Numbers who had fled away in terror to the mountains of Judæa and even to other neighbouring countries, returned and placed themselves under Gedaliah's wise and gentle rule.

It was in the city of Mizpah that Gedaliah lived. All went very happily for some time. Unfortunately, there was a man named Ishmael, a prince, who had managed to escape being made prisoner by Nebuchadnezzar. He was a cruel, selfish man, and instead of rejoicing that his country should be so well governed by one of his own people, he was jealous that the power had not been placed in his hands as he was of royal blood. It was told to some of Gedaliah's friends that Ishmael was conspiring against him, so they came to Mizpah and informed Gedaliah, and one of them named Johanon, begged for permission to go and secretly kill the traitor.

"For why should he slay thee, that all the Jews that are gathered unto thee should be scattered, and the remnant in Judah perish?"

But Gedaliah had too noble a nature to believe such treachery possible, and he forbade Johanon to go after Ishmael.

"Thou shalt not do this thing, for thou speakest falsely of Ishmael."

Poor Johanon! he listened sadly to his generous master's words, he knew but too well that his information was true, still he was obliged to obey the governor's command, but he resolved to watch and guard Gedaliah, if possible, against Ishmael's treachery.

Johanon, alas! was no match for the cunning Ishmael. During the seventh month of Tishri, Ishmael came, bringing ten of his friends to Mizpah. Gedaliah, as if to prove publicly how utterly he believed in Ishmael, invited the whole party to a feast. This was just the opportunity desired by the rebel prince. The invitation was gladly accepted, and after the banquet, Ishmael and his followers fell on the unsuspecting Gedaliah, slaying him and all those who were in his house, even the Chaldean guard sharing the same cruel fate. No feeling of patriotism, no sense of gratitude for the hospitality just received, stayed the assassin's hand, and so died the noble Gedaliah. So craftily was it all planned, that the news of the massacre did not get abroad for two days, and although the faithful Johanon gathered together a body of soldiers and pursued Ishmael to avenge the murder, he did not succeed in capturing him, for Ishmael managed to escape to the country of the Ammonites, who were old enemies of the Jews, and therefore ready to give him shelter.

Now, dear children, you will not require to be told why on the third of Tishri, the fast of Gedaliah is observed. You see it is a day dedicated to the memory of one of our truest patriots.

Gedaliah was a hero, even as much as Judas Maccabeus the warrior. Some of you may think that a hero must be one who distinguishes himself in battle; that is a false

idea; to be a hero, simply means to behave nobly under great trials. You can all try to be heroes. When you withstand some great temptation, when you bear pain uncomplainingly, or perform some kind act of unselfishness, although you may never figure in the pages of history, you are inscribed in God's book of heroes.

Now, let the life of Gedaliah serve as an example to you; be faithful to your nation, yet loyal to your sovereign. Take warning by the crime of Ishmael, for it was jealousy alone, which led him to commit an act of treachery and murder.

## BY THE RIVERS OF BABYLON WE SAT DOWN AND WEPT.

WE sate down and wept by the waters
Of Babel, and thought of the day
When our foe, in the hue of his slaughters
Made Salem's high places his prey;
And ye, oh her desolate daughters,
Were scattered all weeping away.

While sadly we gazed on the river
Which rolled on in freedom below,
They demanded the song; but oh, never
That triumph the stranger shall know!
May this right hand be wither'd for ever
Ere it string our high harp for the foe!

On the willow that harp is suspended,
O Salem! its sound should be free;
And the hour when thy glories were ended
But left we that token of thee:
And ne'er shall its soft tones be blended
With the voice of the spoiler by me!—*Byron.*

## XXXI.

## DAY OF ATONEMENT. יוֹם כִּפּוּר

"Also on the tenth day of the seventh month, there shall be a day of Atonement; it shall be a holy convocation unto you, and ye shall afflict your souls."—*Lev.* xvi. 27.

"It shall be a sabbath of rest unto you, and ye shall afflict your souls, by a statute for ever."—*Lev.* xvi. 31.

MY DEAR CHILDREN,

AS you see by the text which I have chosen, our solemn fast, the Day of Atonement, will occupy us to-day. "A Sabbath of Sabbaths, a day of rest." Let us consider what was meant by "a Sabbath of rest to afflict our souls." How is it to be a rest? It does not mean that you are simply to abstain from your daily work or tasks, but that you are to try and cut yourself off from every-day worldly thoughts and actions, and "commune with your own heart."

I hope I am right in supposing that those whom I am addressing to-day are not really wicked, though they may err from the thoughtlessness of youth. And thus your days may pass without your pausing to think much about your soul and your future life. It is because life for old and young is so busy, that God in His gracious love has appointed this one day for us to spend in prayer and self-examination. Suppose that you were going up a steep hill, and felt very weary, for the path was so steep. How thankful you would feel if you could espy some level sheltered spot, where you could rest and take breath. Well, dear children, Life is this hill up which we are toiling, and Heaven stretches

before us in the dim distance as the haven we hope to reach, when our weary march is over. The Atonement Day is the sheltered spot, the rest, the Sabbath of Sabbaths, which is graciously given us each year to help us on our life's journey.

Dear children, pray do not think that, because you are young, the Atonement Day is not so serious and necessary for you as for your elders. It is, indeed. Just in the same manner as your bodily powers grow with your years, so do your mental ones, and if you do not fight and conquer your faults, they will grow and strengthen, and in time conquer you. There is one special gift which you possess to a greater extent than those about or over you. I mean the knowledge of your own selves, and you must make use of it on this solemn day to find out your own faults or vices, and so resolve to amend them. And there is one thing I want particularly to impress upon you. A resolution taken, although not even expressed in words, is a *promise* before God. I know you would be shocked if you were accused of breaking your word; now consider, when you break a resolution, and fail to eradicate some especial fault that you had resolved to conquer—resolved with prayer and determination—you are guilty of breaking your word to God.

Let us to-day pause before those three words, Repentance, Prayer, and Charity, and see in turn what each one means.

First, *Repentance.* Some of you will perhaps answer: That means being sorry for the wrong we have done. That would be only part of the truth, for repentance, to be perfect and atoning in the sight of God, requires that we must also undo the wrong *done.* Suppose that one of you, in a fit of passion, had taken some-

thing belonging to your brother or a friend and had broken it, no doubt you would very soon feel sorry and ashamed, and quite ready to tell him so. This would not be enough, I should expect you also to make good or repair what had been injured, even if you had to work for it, or to deprive yourself of some pleasure in order to do so. Our God is a God of love, He has no pleasure in punishing. But punishment is a necessary consequence of wrong-doing, therefore we must accept it, but see what God says about the repentant sinner. "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon."—Isaiah, lv. 7. These beautiful words must give us courage and hope. God does not expect perfection from us, our two-fold nature prevents that. But resolve that the good shall conquer. Each victory gained makes the next one easier to obtain.

The Book of Jonah, touching as it does upon repentance, is well chosen for a part of the afternoon service on the Day of Atonement.

Next we come to *Prayer.* Do you ever pray? Does this seem a strange question? Well, dear children, you will tell me, "Why, of course we *say* our prayers every day, when we get up in the morning and when we go to bed, and perhaps at our meal times." Yes, that is true, you say or repeat long sentences that have been taught you, but perhaps your thoughts are wandering away to other things, so I should not call *this* prayer. I will tell you my idea of prayer. It is direct communion with God, it is abstracting or cutting yourself off from every other thought than your Maker, it is a direct intercourse with Him. Your lips need not move, not

a word need be uttered, and yet you may be addressing yourself to God. If you feel joyful, go and express your thanks to the Almighty, and if you find your own words feeble, then take one of David's psalms of praise and repeat that. If, on the other hand, you feel miserable, either because you have been doing wrong, or because trouble has come upon you, then there is the more necessity that you should go and lay bare your heart to your heavenly Father. He will hear you; "He is always nigh to those that call upon Him, to those that call upon Him in truth."

Remember that you want no mediator, no intercessor, no one to plead for you with God. His ear is always open to receive an earnest prayer. If you had offended your father or mother, and wanted their forgiveness, you would not ask someone to go to them on your behalf. No! your natural and proper impulse would be to go yourself, and humbly ask their pardon. The same holds good in your relation to God; you are His child, and He is your father. Think of this when you follow the solemn Atonement Service, especially when you utter the confession of sins, which is repeated several times during the day. I will read it to you:

"We have trespassed; we have dealt treacherously; we have stolen; we have spoken slander; we have committed iniquity, and have done wickedly; we have acted presumptuously; we have committed violence; we have framed falsehood; we have counselled evil; we have uttered lies; we have scorned; we have rebelled; we have blasphemed; we have revolted; we have acted perversely; we have transgressed; we have oppressed; we have been stiff-necked; we have acted wickedly; we have corrupted ourselves; we have done abominably; we have gone astray, and have caused others to err;

we have turned aside from Thy excellent precepts and institutions, and it hath not profited us. But Thou art just concerning all that hath come upon us; for Thou hast dealt most truly, but we have done wickedly." [1]

Some of you are, perhaps, thinking to yourselves, why, there are scarcely any of those sins, that *I* have been guilty of. Indeed, I hope that you have not; but instead of letting this idea run through your mind, I want you rather to examine yourselves, and consider which of them you may have committed during the past year. They are not to be lightly repeated, but must each be carefully weighed. For instance, when you say, "We have dealt treacherously," how few of you can truly declare that you have always been straightforward, never sly, nor underhand in your conduct to others! When you repeat "We have stolen," remember it need not follow that you have actually taken something that belonged to another. A far wider meaning is intended than this. Can you conscientiously say to yourself that you have always been honest at school or in the workshop? Have you never copied your school-fellow's lessons, and given them in as the result of your own industry, or have you stolen *ideas* from your fellow-workman, and passed them off as your own? This would be moral theft—only another form of dishonesty —and in this case you might sadly confess "We have stolen." "We have spoken slander." This is, at the same time, one of the commonest and most dangerous

[1] Observe that this Confession is in the plural person; no member of God's nation can commit a sin without the whole people feeling the burden of the wrong-doing. The children of Israel are brethren in the strictest meaning of the word; what touches one, touches all.

of sins, and yet how thoughtlessly you often commit it. You have heard a little gossip about one of your friends, and you repeat it, although unintentionally, with a slight addition. You do not think of the mischief you may cause, for I am not supposing you to be guilty of malice, or else you would have to utter the confessions "We have framed falsehood," "we have uttered lies," with a knowledge that you should entreat God to pardon those sins.

Dear children, bear this always in mind, if you have nothing good or pleasant to repeat of your companions, then say nothing. Remember Solomon's wise words, "There is a time to keep silence, and a time to speak." —Eccles. iii. 7.

If people would only do this, they would not have to accuse themselves of slander or scandal.

"We have acted presumptuously, we have been stiff-necked." Which of you can flatter yourself that you have not acted presumptuously? Have you been humble and meek, or have you not indeed been presumptuous and obstinate?

"We have committed violence." Have you been gentle and loving, or have you not rather given way to temper, and even allowed your passions to remain uncontrolled?

"We have counselled evil, we have corrupted ourselves." What a sad confession this must be if you feel that you have advised and led others to do wrong. It is a graver sin than if you had yourself committed the evil.

"We have rebelled, we have revolted." Yes, dear children, I fear that too many of you must acknowledge that, at times, you have not been willing to submit to the authority of your parents and teachers, but have

thought you knew better than they, and perhaps set them at defiance.

"We have blasphemed." Of this terrible sin—profaning the name of God, that is, cursing and swearing—I sincerely pray you are none of you guilty, but if you are, then you must humbly implore forgiveness of Him.

"We have oppressed." Can this be laid to your charge; have you taken advantage of the weakness of others? I shall use a plain and ugly word for you boys—have you bullied those less able to take their own part than yourselves, when you ought rather to have lent them a helping hand? And girls—how have you behaved to your sisters, and those whom you may consider less clever and amusing than yourselves? All these questions you must think over, and weigh for yourselves in the balance. You will know if you are found wanting, and, if so, you must truly repent, if you desire to be inscribed in the Book of Life—that is, to be forgiven by God.

"We have done abominably." Alas, how often during the past year have you not broken God's laws and laid yourselves open to this accusation. Have you not turned aside from His excellent precepts, and how has it profited you?

Dear children, let me beg of you, do not profane the name of God and His holy house by uttering words with your lips which you do not feel in your heart, or while your thoughts are far away; but piously and thoughtfully repeat the confession of sin, which I have just explained to you.

We have now come to the last of the three means by which we hope to obtain forgiveness—*Charity*. Well, some of you have doubtless a fair idea of what this means. I should say that charity is of two kinds—

charity of action and charity of thought. I want you to notice a certain fact about this; the same word in Hebrew stands for charity and for righteousness, and from this we may conclude that charity is the highest form of goodness. Charity of act or deed may be easy to practise, for when you give away to those who are in want, you obtain actual enjoyment; it is delightful to be generous and to watch the good you are able to do to others. But those who are poor, and have nothing to spare for their neighbours, they too can be charitable. For them remains charity of thought. Charity of thought means thinking no evil of those about you, and also, not being ready to believe an evil report, but rather to put a kind construction, instead of an unkind one, on the conduct of others. I want you to do more than this. Even when you have been badly treated, instead of saying, as you may feel tempted to do in such a case, "Oh, I will not forget it; I will repay him for it some of these days," try and think that perhaps the offender has not been as carefully taught as you have, that he does wrong from ignorance, not from malice, and instead of resenting the injury, will you endeavour to win him back to good by your own forgiving *charitable* example?

Such an act of charity would please God more than a gift of money. Still I do not wish you to think that charitable deeds are not also praiseworthy, and to you who may have but little, I would say, share your small possessions with those who have less; you will feel quite as happy by the deed as the one whom you benefit. Now listen to this beautiful verse: "Thou shalt not avenge, nor bear any grudge against the children of thy people, but thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself: I am the Lord."—Lev. xix. 18.

I hope that you now understand the meaning of these words : prayer, repentance, and charity, and by practising them, strive to obtain forgiveness which is from year to year offered to us on the Day of Atonement. In the olden times of the Tabernacle and the Temple, the white-robed High Priest on this one day of the whole year entered the Sanctuary, and in the holy place prayed for the people, and made the special offering of the scape-goat. We have now neither high priest nor offering, but our prayers, if humbly offered, are equally acceptable to God. Remember that no man can atone for another, every one must bear the consequences of his own sin, young and old alike, for "Even a child is known by his doings."

So we will be grateful to God for the fast day, when we humble ourselves in the spirit and the flesh. See what poor frail mortals we are—twenty-four hours of abstinence from food proves our very weakness, and shows how dependent we are upon God for all He gives us. Truly a beautiful day is the יוֹם כִּפּוּר, the very type of Judaism, not mournful or sad, but pure and solemn, and withal joyful.

"We have no refuge, none on earth to aid us,
But Thee, O Father, who Thine own hath made us ;
Keep us in life, forgive our sins, deliver us now and ever."

## ABOU BEN ADHEM.

ABOU BEN ADHEM—may his tribe increase—
Awoke one night from a deep dream of peace,
And saw, within the moonlight of his room,
Making it rich, and like a lily in bloom,
An angel writing in a book of gold;
Exceeding peace had made Ben Adhem bold;
And to the presence in the room he said,
"What writest thou?" The vision raised his head,
And with a look made of all sweet accord,
Answered, "the names of those who love the Lord."
"And is mine one?" said Abou. "Nay, not so,"
Replied the angel. Abou spoke more low,
But cheerily still; and said, "I pray Thee then
Write me as one that loves his fellow men!"
The angel wrote and vanished. The next night
It came again with a great wakening light,
And showed the names whom love of God had blest,
And lo! Ben Adhem's name led all the rest.

*Leigh Hunt.*

## XXXII.

## THE FEAST OF TABERNACLES.

"The fifteenth day of the seventh month shall be the feast of tabernacles for seven days unto the Lord.

"When ye have gathered in the fruit of the land, ye shall keep a feast unto the Lord seven days. And ye shall take you on the first day the boughs of goodly trees, branches of palm trees, and the boughs of thick trees, and willows of the brook; and ye shall rejoice before the Lord your God seven days.

"Ye shall dwell in booths seven days, that your generations may know that I made the children of Israel to dwell in booths, when I brought them out of the land of Egypt: I am the Lord your God."—*Lev.* xxiii., 34, 39, 40, 42, 43.

MY DEAR CHILDREN,

OUR subject to-day will be the last of the three great festivals, the שָׁלֹשׁ רְגָלִים when all who could, went up from the different parts of Palestine to Jerusalem, to the holy Temple. This festival is called the Feast of Tabernacles, also the feast of in-gathering, that is, the harvest feast. Moses ordered it to be kept for two reasons. First, it was to commemorate the long years in the wilderness, when the children of Israel were wandering from one place to another, and had to live in tents or booths. During all this time you will remember that God's merciful care never failed them. Time after time He forgave their murmurings and rebellions. In the barren, sandy desert, bread and fowl were sent from Heaven for food, water gushed forth from the flinty rock, until at last, purified by suffering, they were led into the promised land of Canaan.

In order that we should never forget this great work of God, we are told to keep the Feast of Tabernacles every year. Such of us as can, should build a booth or tent, and spend a portion of each day there; "that your generations may know that I made the children of Israel to dwell in booths when I brought them out of the land of Egypt."

You will say, how is it possible for us nowadays to keep the command and dwell in booths; we cannot. Living, for the most part as we do, in towns or big cities, there are very few who can erect a booth and dwell therein, but there is one part of the ceremonial law that we can all observe within our modern European homes. We can have our lulav, לוּלָב. We can take of the "fruit of the goodly tree" (the citron),—the palm branches, round which are bound the thick myrtles and the willows of the brook, and when we wave these backward and forward, and right and left, we can rejoice before the Lord and remember that even so is His love distributed in all directions, and thus shall we keep the holy day in its spirit as well as in its ceremonial part.

It is a great mistake of many in the present day, to throw aside all ceremonies, and confine themselves only to spiritual religion: neither is complete without the other. Ceremonies, if thoughtfully and reverently observed, form the hedge and safeguard to the spiritual side of Judaism. If you have a very precious book that you prize extremely, you would not allow it to remain unbound, for fear that in time some of its pages might get lost or injured, in fact, you would bestow on it as beautiful a binding as you could manage to get for it. So it is with our old ceremonies, they are the binding or cover that preserve the inner and holier

part of our religion, and it is only those who do not understand them, who fail to appreciate their beauty. See what a pretty meaning there is in this taking of the luloff. We come and rejoice before the Lord, our hands filled with treasures from the vegetable world, for this is the harvest festival.

Let us take each object and see what it represents. First, the fruit of the goodly tree, the citron ; you know what a delicious preserve it makes, and then how fragrant it is, so that you would describe it as good to look at, nice to eat, and pleasant to smell. Then we have the palm branch. Palms do not grow wild in this country, they are only to be found in conservatories, but perhaps some of you may have been to Kew, or to other public gardens, and have seen them there. The palm is a noble tree, tall and straight, with large spreading leaves. It is the type of manly beauty and strength, and not only beautiful but useful too. Even the fibre is of some service.

Next we come to the branches of thick myrtle, which are also bound round the luloff when we hold it in our hands. Perhaps you do not know the myrtle. It is an evergreen shrub, with delicate white scented blossoms. Here, again, we have something to delight our sense of sight and smell. Then we have mixed with the palm and myrtle, branches of willow. The willow is just the very opposite of its companions, it has but few charms to recommend it. It is not good for food—it bears no flowers—it has no perfume. Why, then, do you think it was to be gathered and used ? The lowly willow is the type or symbol of grace and humility ; its long drooping branches over-hanging the cool river have an attraction of their own, and we may learn from this, that in God's sight all are equally acceptable, equally loved by Him.

The humblest and the poorest of us are the same in His sight, we are all together to rejoice before Him.

Now, will you try and resemble the luloff, make up your minds to be useful and afford shelter or help to others, even as the noble palm branches do in hot countries? You can give forth sweetness by your amiable, loving behaviour, like the citron and the sweet-scented myrtle, and you can imitate the graceful drooping willow by being humble and retiring. I want you to notice that although beside the lofty palm, the small myrtle and the modest willow would be almost overlooked, God desired that we should bring offerings of them all together to His house, as if to prove that nothing which is pure, however small it may be, is contemptible or unworthy of His acceptance.

Now, dear children, we will talk about Tabernacles as the Harvest Feast. It is but natural and proper that when the autumn comes and the fruits of the beauteous summer are gathered in, that we should "rejoice before the Lord, and give thanks unto Him." It is the real זְמַן שִׂמְחָתֵנוּ, the season to be joyful. In the old pagan times, when Israel was the only nation that worshipped the true God, the Harvest Festival was a terrible period; it was a signal for riot and sin, and I believe it was to guard against the chance of this, that with the command to celebrate the in-gathering of the harvest, was coupled the injunction never to forget the forty years in the wilderness. This thought would surely check the unholy feeling of pride. The recollection of the wanderings in the desert, Israel's frequent backslidings, and God's equally frequent gracious forgiveness, must make us humble and thankful to Him.

Every year whilst the Israelites still had a land of their own, all who could, went up to Jerusalem on the

15th of Tishri, carrying their offerings of fruit, or grain, or wine, or oil, to the priests, and giving thanks to God for the harvest just garnered. Palestine was a very fertile country, rich in vineyards and oliveyards.

In the book of Nehemiah we read of a special celebration of the Feast of Tabernacles. After the Jews had been in captivity in Babylon for many years, they were allowed, as you doubtless remember, to return to their native land—Palestine. They were led back by three great men. Their names were Ezra, Nehemiah, and Zerubbabel. Ezra and Nehemiah both wrote the history of this return, and how the Temple was rebuilt in their time. They tell us how, when Tishri, the seventh month, arrived, and all the people came up to Jerusalem from the different cities of Palestine, the book of the law was read aloud with the command to keep the Feast of Tabernacles. There they found written, how they should "go unto the Mount and fetch olive branches, and pine branches, and myrtle branches, and palm branches, and branches of thick trees to make booths." So the people went forth and brought them and made booths on the flat roofs of their houses.

We are no longer an agricultural nation, still there is another harvest we must think of gathering in before we grow old, and perhaps useless, in the winter of our lives. We must sow our seed in the spring time; that is our youth. It bears fruit and ripens in our middle age, and if it has been carefully tended, our harvest will be rich, perhaps not rich in the worldly meaning, but in the spiritual and holier sense.

Do not be disheartened if sometimes your efforts are not successful; think of the farmer, and how often he has to bear disappointment, how in some soil the seed has to be sown again and again before it can yield

a goodly return for his labour, and repeat to yourselves the words of David the sweet Psalmist:

"He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him."—Ps. cxxvi. 6.

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## A HARVEST HYMN.

WE plough the fields, and scatter
The good seed on the land,
But it is fed and watered
By God's Almighty Hand;
He sends the snow in winter,
The warmth to swell the grain,
The breezes and the sunshine,
And soft refreshing rain.
All good gifts around us
Are sent from Heaven above,
Then thank the Lord, O thank the Lord
For all His love.

He only is the Maker
Of all things near and far;
He paints the wayside flower,
He lights the evening star.
The winds and waves obey Him,
By Him the birds are fed;
Much more to us, His children,
He gives our daily bread.
All good gifts around us
Are sent from Heaven above,
Then thank the Lord, O thank the Lord
For all His love.

We thank Thee then, O Father,
For all things bright and good,
The seed time and the harvest,
Our life, our health, our food ;
Accept the gifts we offer
For all Thy love imparts,
And what Thou most desirest,
Our humble, thankful hearts.
All good gifts around us
Are sent from Heaven above,
Then thank the Lord, O thank the Lord
For all His love.—*Matthius Claudius.*

## XXXIII.

## DEDICATION, OR HANUCAH.

MY DEAR CHILDREN,

OUR holiday theme to-day shall be of the Feast of Dedication, or Hanucah, as we generally call it. It is different to any of the other festivals, as they all belonged to Bible times, whilst this one is what we call a post-biblical ordinance. By that I mean, that the events which led to its being instituted, happened at a period later than the Bible History. These events took place two or three hundred years after the Temple was rebuilt.

Now, although the Jews from the time of the second Temple had possession of their own land, they were in quite a different position from what they had been, when governed by kings of their own, of the royal house of David. They were now a tributary people. So you see they were not entirely a free nation, but had to acknowledge as master a foreign king, pay him a yearly tribute or tax and accept such laws as he chose to dictate to them. If this foreign king happened to be good one, then the yoke did not press heavily, they paid the tribute and there the matter ended, but at the time we are going to talk about to-day, matters were very bad indeed for the poor Jews.

The king under whose authority the Jews now were, was called Antiochus Epiphanes (the Illustrious). It will puzzle you to see why he should have been called "Illustrious" for he was only famous for his vices. Rollin the ancient historian, tells us, that Antiochus

tacked this fine name on himself, and that many people, who would not flatter him, called him instead "Epimanes" or mad, which certainly seems a much more fitting title for a man who was guilty of such inhuman cruelties as we hear he committed. He believed in no God himself, and he determined if possible to abolish the worship of the true God in Judæa. Bands of brutal soldiers came to Jerusalem to enforce his impious orders. They entered the holy Temple and carried away the golden vessels. The books of the law were rent asunder and then burned. A statue to Jupiter the heathen god was set up in the sacred building, and not only were the people forbidden to offer any sacrifices on the altar, where the priests had for so long officiated, but to add to the people's despair, swine's flesh was brought in and offered up to the false gods. This was not all, the Jews were forbidden on pain of death to keep the Sabbath, or to exercise any of the rites of their religion; they were ordered to give it up and turn pagans. A few cowards did obey the new orders, and in form, though we may be sure, not in heart, followed the Syrian or Greek rites, but the vast majority of Jews either secretly or openly held true to the religion of their fathers.

I should make you sad, were I to tell you half the piteous stories of martyrdom, that have been handed down to us from those times. Perhaps you have heard of the brave old Eleazar, who, rather than eat of the abomination, swine's flesh, suffered a cruel death, praising the God of Israel, and begging those about him to remain faithful as he did. Then there is the tale, scarcely to be believed of the Jewish mother, who rather than be false to her conscience, saw her seven children one after another tortured to death before she accepted with exultant courage a martyr's death.

Surely when you hear of such conduct, dear children, you ought to feel how small and trivial are the sacrifices that we are sometimes called upon to make for our religion. Suppose that we have occasionally to practise a little self-denial in order to conform to Judaism, ought we not rather to feel proud than angry, and at best what does the sacrifice generally entail? Perhaps the loss of some pecuniary gain, or possibly the deprivation of some pleasure or pastime!

Well, for three years, the tyrant Antiochus had been heaping up one cruel act upon another, when a deliverer suddenly arose, even as in olden times God had often raised one up for His beloved people.

At Modin, a small town not far from Jerusalem, there lived a good old priest called Mattathias, and his five sons. In spite of the king's command, he still practised all the rites of his religion. The news of his steadfastness must have reached Jerusalem, for one of Antiochus' officers came to Modin in order to offer an abominable sacrifice on the altar of the true God. This was more than the brave old man would allow, in one minute he had struck down the officer and had also killed a cowardly Jew who was assisting in the sacrifice. This bold step taken, Mattathias shouted to the crowd about him "Whosoever is zealous for God's law, and will keep His commandment, let him follow me." A great many joined the old priest, but as they were still unprepared to fight the Syrian soldiers, they fled to the mountains. Here the standard of revolt was raised, and the people flocked to Mattathias. They took for their motto on the flag the words,

"Who is like unto Thee among the gods, oh Lord?"

מִי כָמֹכָה בָּאֵלִם יְיָ

and the family of Mattathias and his sons were from this called the Maccabees, which are the initial letters of the motto (מכבי). When Mattathias had enough men around him, he sallied forth from the mountains and met the enemy in battle. He defeated them and pulled down the altars raised to the false gods wherever he came, and restored God's worship, and thus courage began to return to the poor down-trodden Jews.

I told you that Mattathias was an old man, his strength now began to fail, and he felt that death was near, so he called his five sons to his side, and gave them his last injunctions. Mattathias charged his sons to continue his work, to fight the tyrant inch by inch until Jerusalem was regained, and the one pure worship restored. He reminded them of God's many acts of goodness to Israel, and also recalled the lives of those who had been faithful unto death. He desired his third son Judas to take the command of the army, as he was best fitted for that post, whilst his second son, Simon, was to act as adviser. Perhaps you would like to hear the old patriot's own words as we find them in the book of Maccabees:

"Now therefore, my sons, be zealous for the law, and give your lives for the covenant of your fathers.

"And behold, I know that your brother Simon is a man of counsel, give ear unto him always; he shall be a father unto you.

"As for Judas Maccabeus, he hath been mighty and strong, even from his youth up; let him be your captain, and fight the battle of the people."—1 Maccabees, ii. 50, 65, 66.

Soon after this parting address, Mattathias died, and his commands were lovingly and faithfully followed by his sons. Judas Maccabeus proved the worthy son of a

worthy father. All the Maccabee brothers were brave, but Judas was the bravest of them all. He is one of the noblest heroes we find in history, courageous, modest, unwavering and steadfast to his faith, and yet no bigot, as the following fact will prove.

One of Antiochus' officers, knowing that the Jews would think it a sin to engage in battle on the Sabbath, chose that day for attacking them, so that instead of a fight it became a massacre, as the Jews would not even use their weapons in self-defence. When, however, the same measures were adopted against Judas, and he was attacked on the Sabbath, he bade his men defend themselves; he was wise enough to see that this was the only course to adopt, or otherwise in time the Jews would have been exterminated. You will agree with Judas that this sacrifice of human life was not required, nor would it have been pleasing to God, it was not desecration of the Sabbath to act in self-defence. Antiochus was furious when he heard that Judas with his comparatively small band of followers, who could not compare for training with his armed hosts, was gaining victory after victory. New generals were sent off to conquer this daring "rebel" as Antiochus termed him. Antiochus did not take into account what Judas and his men had at stake. They were fighting for their country and their God, and they never went into any encounter without offering up prayer for divine assistance. In the dim distance was Jerusalem, and every effort was made to reach that city. At length they found themselves within marching distance of the beloved spot, alas! when they arrived, they found it almost deserted. In what a sad state was God's house! No priest, no book of the law in sight. They saw "the sanctuary desolate and the altar profaned, and the gates burnt up and shrubs

growing in the courts as in a forest or in one of the mountains, and the priests' chambers pulled down. They rent their clothes and wept aloud, and cast ashes upon their heads."—1 Maccabees, iv. 38, 39.

But Judas was not one to indulge long in useless grief, he was a man of action, and soon he divided his men into two bodies. Some of these were told off to fight, and the rest were set to work to cleanse the sanctuary, and to build a new altar in place of the one that had been defiled by heathen sacrifices. Judas also reappointed the priests, and chose men of good character and who knew the law. They remade the vessels for the Temple, in place of those that Antiochus had taken away.

By the 25th of Kislev the work was complete, and all was to be dedicated, so they lighted the holy lamp which for so long had been extinguished. There was just one little pot of oil found for this purpose, enough for one day's use, but marvellous to tell, it kept on burning for eight days, by which time the priests had prepared some more.

It is in commemoration of this fact that we always burn the Hanucah lights for eight consecutive nights, and I think you will say it is a pretty tribute to the memory of our brave warrior Judas Maccabeus. The feast of Hanucah itself is kept out of gratitude for God's help to our people, when suffering from the cruel oppression of Antiochus Epiphanes.

Judas' hard work did not end with the recovery of Jerusalem and the restoration of the Temple. The whole of his life was spent in opposing the enemies of his people, for Antiochus would not yield to him, but sent general after general to try and recover the lost ground, which, however, he never succeeded in doing.

I am sure many of you love music. I wonder if any of you have heard of the famous musician Handel. He has written a great deal of sacred music, and one of his most beautiful works is the oratorio "Judas Maccabeus." A march that occurs in it—"See the conquering hero comes"—is such a favourite air, that it is usually played when some distinguished person is specially honoured on some festive occasion. We must feel proud at such times that the life of our brave countryman should have furnished the noble musician with the subject for his grand work.

We read of many deeds of bravery in those days, for Judas was so beloved by his men, that his courage inspired them to imitate him. On one occasion, when King Antiochus' men had come out to do battle, they found that a number of elephants were being used in the fight. This was not at all an uncommon proceeding in those days. I will tell you how they made use of these huge beasts. On each one was placed a sort of little tower, which held about thirty men besides the driver who guided the animal. So you see what a formidable foe one elephant was, as he carried so many soldiers on his back, all well armed, he was a host in himself. Now one of Judas' brothers named Eleazar Savaran, noticed that one of the elephants had royal harness, and stood higher than the others, so he imagined that it must carry the king himself. He therefore determined to sacrifice his life in killing the elephant, for he thought that if the royal tower fell, the enemy would lose heart and run away.

Thus Eleazar rushed into the midst of the battle, slaying right and left, striking terror on all, so that his foes divided from him on both sides, until he reached the elephant he had singled out. He bravely

crept under the animal and thrust his sword into him. The huge elephant fell, crushing the hero to death. In spite of this act of bravery, Judas and his men had to retreat, because he saw that the enemy were too strong for him. Judas died a true soldier's death. He fell in battle—a fitting end to such a brave life. How different to the miserable death of Antiochus! He was attacked by a most loathsome disease, and died in great agony, perhaps tormented by the memory of what he had made others undergo.

Now, dear children, I hope, after hearing the story of Hanucah, you will draw this lesson from it. Be brave and true to your principles. If you know that a thing is right, whether it concern your faith or your daily life, hold to it and struggle to maintain it. Take Judas Maccabeus for your model. Arm yourself for the daily battle of life, not with a sword and a breast-plate as he had to do (for happily your combat will be a bloodless one), but with faith, resolution and courage. Above all, take care not to be moral cowards; recognize what your duty is and then always act up to it, never listening to weak or bad advisers, but recalling Longfellow's noble words:

"In the world's broad field of battle,
In the bivouac of life,
Be not like dumb driven cattle,
Be a hero in the strife."

## FOR A LIFE UNDYING.

PRAISE to the heroes
Who struck for the right,
Where freedom and truth
Were defended in fight.
Of blood-shedding hirelings
The deeds are abhorred,
But the patriot smites
With the sword of the Lord.

Praise to the martyrs
Who died for the right,
Nor ever bowed down
At the bidding of might,
Their ashes were cast
All abroad on the wind,
But more widely the blessings
They won for mankind.

Praise to the sages,
The teachers of right,
Whose voice in the darkness
Said "Let there be light."
The Sophist may gain
The renown of an hour,
But wisdom is glory,
While knowledge is power.

Heroes, martyrs and sages,
True prophets of right,
They foresaw and they made
Man's futurity bright.
Their fame would ascend
Though the world sunk in flames,
Be their spirit on all
Who sing praise to their names.

*W. J. Fox.*

## XXXIV.

## PURIM.—PART I.

MY DEAR CHILDREN,

I MEAN to-day to tell you the story of Purim. To some of you perhaps, the word only means a bright holiday, when everything is done to make you happy and gay, when you receive presents, and, I hope, give them, not only to your friends and relatives, but also to those who may be in poorer circumstances than yourselves.

It is in the book of Esther that we find the reason for the institution of Purim. The scene is laid, not in Palestine, but in Persia, where a number of Jews were still living, after Ezra had led all those back to Jerusalem, who were willing to assist in rebuilding the Temple. The king of the country was called Ahasuerus; he was very rich and powerful, ruling over a hundred and twenty-seven provinces, and known to be a great tyrant. After he had been three years on the throne he gave a grand feast to all his princes and courtiers, by whom he was flattered as only Oriental despots are flattered. He was anxious that they should see and admire the fine palace in Shushan where he lived.

We read that the floors of this palace were of coloured marble, inlaid with silver and gold. The rooms were divided by curtains of the richest tints, hanging by silver rings to marble pillars. The guests were served out of golden vessels, and whilst they were feasting with the king, Vashti the queen was entertaining the women

in her own royal house, for in Eastern lands the men and women have separate houses.

On the seventh day, when "the heart of the king was merry with wine" he commanded his chamberlains "to bring Vashti the queen, with the crown royal, to show the princes and the people her beauty." The king's message, or rather command, was not obeyed, for the beautiful Vashti refused to come. Ahasuerus was furious, he was not accustomed to have his wishes balked, and now arose the serious question, how should Queen Vashti be punished for daring to oppose her lord? One of the princes present named Memucan suggested that she should be dethroned and another queen elected in her place, "for" said he, "if this deed of the queen's gets spoken of abroad, then will other women despise their husbands and follow her example." The plan pleased the king, and a decree was at once passed that Vashti should no longer be queen, and furthermore, that all wives should honour and obey their husbands.

Summary judgment, you will some of you say, but in reality Vashti was fortunate not to lose her head, for life was not much valued by those Eastern despots, and for lesser offences than Vashti's many a subject was instantly beheaded.

Some time after these events, when the king's wrath was appeased, one of his servants said to him, "Let my lord the king now choose another queen. Send some of your officers through the kingdom to seek for beautiful maidens, and have them all brought to the women's palace at Shushan. Then whichever pleases you the best, make her queen in Vashti's place." The king approved of the plan, and the officers at once set to work.

Now in Shushan there lived a Jew named Mordecai. He was a descendant of one of the exiles who had been

carried away from Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar, when the holy city was taken, and the Temple destroyed. With Mordecai lived a beautiful young orphan niece or cousin called Esther. When the king's officers saw her, they decided that she was to come to the palace and be seen by the king. She had besides her beauty, pretty winning ways, and we hear that she soon became a favourite with the officials at the women's palace. We can imagine with what mingled feelings Mordecai saw her depart. He bade Esther for the present keep silence about her religion and her race, but each day saw him at the gate seeking tidings of his well-beloved. At last, the great news came to his ears, Ahasuerus had seen Esther, and had chosen her for his queen. The royal crown had been set on her head, and feasts and rejoicings had taken place all through the country.

When Mordecai heard of this change in Esther's position, he rejoiced, but he had no wish to obtrude himself on the king's notice as Esther's relative; he felt sure that she would not forget her people, but would be ready to help them, should they ever require her aid. He little knew how soon this would be the case.

One day, when Mordecai was sitting at the king's gate, he happened to hear that two of the chamberlains had taken offence at something the king had done, and were conspiring to kill him. Mordecai at once sent word to Esther, who informed the king of the plot, taking care to let him know that it was Mordecai who had found out the king's danger. Notice this, my dear children, she was too honest and noble-minded to take credit for what she did not deserve, so, as the Bible tells us, "she certified the king thereof in Mordecai's name." Inquiries were made, and they found out that Mordecai's information was correct, so the two men were hanged on a tree,

and the account of this was written in the book of the Chronicles before the king.

Now we must turn for a while from the good modest young queen and her faithful relative Mordecai, to a very different character. In many of the stories that you young people are fond of reading, there is a villain, and the story of Purim furnishes us with a very cold-blooded one. You can supply the name I am sure. Haman was Ahasuerus' prime minister, and like his master he was a tyrant, exacting obedience and slavish servility from all who surrounded him. When he passed through the city the people bowed and prostrated themselves before him as though he had been a god. Haman was the king's favourite, armed with his seal, he was second in power only to his royal master, and still there was one man who refused to bow down before him.

This irritated the royal favourite to such a degree that he determined to punish Mordecai, for he was the man. He found out that he belonged to the Jewish race—a race to which he did not feel well disposed. Why not get rid of Mordecai and all his people at once! You must not forget that no one as yet knew that Esther was a Jewess, or else Haman would have feared to set about his cruel plan.

Haman, you have already seen, was vain, proud, and cruel—now you will have to add deceit to his other vices. Instead of coming to Ahasuerus and saying: "There is a Jew who has offended me, I suppose you will not mind my killing him and all his people," he went to work in this manner.

As the king was fond of magnificence and display, he must always have required a great deal of money to spend on his pleasures, so Haman, considering this,

came to him and said: "There is a certain people scattered through all the provinces of your kingdom; their laws are different from those of other people, and they do not keep the king's laws; it is not for your interest to allow them to remain. Let it be written that they may be destroyed, and I will pay ten thousand talents of silver into the king's treasury."

What did the king care about these strange people? His favourite said that they were in the way, and he seemed to dislike them; besides, I told you that human life was not much valued in Eastern countries. Even the money he was welcome to, for the king did not accept the offered bribe. He took his ring with the royal seal off his finger, and giving it to Haman, said: "The silver is given to thee, the people also, to do with them as it seemeth good to thee."

Haman, delighted at the king's gracious permission, set scribes to work, and letters were sent all through the vast kingdom, ordering that on a certain day in Adar, for which he had, in his superstitious spirit, cast a *Pur*, or lot, all the Jews, men, women, and children, should be put to death. To urge the people to carry out the cruel command, they were told further, that they might seize whatever they liked belonging to their victims. These letters were signed with the king's seal, which he had given to Haman.

When Haman saw that the first part of his revengeful plot had succeeded, he felt that he could sit down and feast with the king. But in the city of Shushan, where numbers of Jews dwelt, there was sadness and bewilderment, for they knew not why this terrible fate was coming upon them.

The sad news soon reached Mordecai, and he tore his clothes, and robed himself in sackcloth and ashes, which

in those days, was usual when people had some great trouble. Then he went into the midst of the city, crying out with a loud and bitter cry. At the king's gate he stopped, for none might enter there with these signs of mourning. Throughout the land the Jews, like Mordecai, wore sackcloth, and wept and fasted. In a little while Esther was told of this, and it grieved her exceedingly to know that Mordecai was in sore trouble; so she sent him new garments in lieu of his sackcloth, but he refused her gift. Then her tender woman's heart was deeply moved, and she sent her own especial chamberlain, one Hatach, to see Mordecai, and find out "what it was and why it was." Mordecai was found, and soon told the chamberlain the terrible news. He also sent Esther a copy of the king's decree, and charged her to go before Ahasuerus, and entreat of him to spare the lives of her people. "So Hatach came and told Esther the words of Mordecai."—Esther, iv. 9.

## A HYMN.

IN holy books we read how God hath spoken
To holy men in many different ways;
But hath the present worked no sign or token?
Is God quite silent in these latter days?

The word were but a blank, a hollow sound,
If He that spake it were not speaking still;
If all the light and all the shade around
Were aught but issues of Almighty will.

So then, believe that every bird that sings,
And every flower that stars the elastic sod,
And every thought the happy summer brings
To the pure spirit is a word of God.

*Hartley Coleridge.*

## XXXV.

## PURIM.—PART II.

THERE was a law in Shushan forbidding any man or woman to come unbidden before the king into the inner court on pain of death. For thirty days Esther had not been called before the king, and she was afraid. Now of this she informed Mordecai, who bade the chamberlain reply, "Think not you will escape in the king's house, more than all the Jews. For if you keep silence at this time, then will deliverance arise from some other quarter, and who knows whether you have not become queen for the very purpose of saving your people?"

Mordecai's faith and trust in God inspired Esther with courage, and she resolved to risk her life for her people. "Tell Mordecai," she said, "to call our people in Shushan together, let them fast and pray for three days, and I and my maidens will do the same. Then will I go unto the king in spite of the law, and if I perish, I perish."

"So Mordecai went his way and did all that Esther had commanded him."—Esther, iv. 17.

Sweet, brave, faithful Esther, think of what these three days meant to her! Life or death, not only for herself, but for all the Jews. What would settle this question, on what would it depend?

When the third day came Esther put on her royal robes, and presented herself at the inner court of the king's house. There he sat on the royal throne, and when he saw the queen standing in the court, he was pleased, and at once held out the golden sceptre, that was

in his hand. This was the sign that Esther was not to die, but to approach the throne. Trembling, but with a lighter heart, she drew near, and according to custom, touched the top of the sceptre. "What wilt thou, Queen Esther? What is thy request? It shall be given thee, to the half of the kingdom." You see that she did indeed find favour in his sight, he truly loved her. Still it was but a small request she made. Merely, would her liege lord and his prime minister come that day to a banquet she had prepared? The king was graciously pleased to accept her invitation both for himself and Haman. At the banquet the king again asked her if she had any petition or request to make, and her reply was much the same as before. She asked them to return on the morrow, again to feast with her, and then she would state her petition. History does not tell us why she delayed in making her real object known. It may be that her courage failed at the very moment, or she may have thought it prudent to coax the king into a good humour before she risked to do or die.

Haman went forth that day with a glad heart. What greater honour could he have than for the queen to single him out to dine alone with her and Ahasuerus? His satisfaction would have been less, had he known that his royal mistress belonged to the hated race of Jews, but of that fact no one was yet aware, the time had not arrived for Esther to declare herself.

Mordecai was in the king's gate when Haman came forth, he neither stood up, nor moved for him. Haman was angry and indignant at this, and he went home to his wife Zeresh and told her of the queen's banquet and how he was bidden to return on the morrow. "Yet," he said, "all this avails me nothing, so long as I see Mordecai the Jew sitting at the king's gate." Zeresh seems to have

been as cruel and vindictive as her husband, for she proposed that a gallows fifty cubits high should be erected, and permission asked before the feast to hang Mordecai upon it. "Then," said she, "you can go in merrily with the king to the banquet." The advice pleased Haman and the gallows were raised.

But on the very night of the banquet, the king's sleep was disturbed, and he ordered his attendants to bring the book of Chronicles and read to him, in order to lull him to sleep, or at all events to distract his mind. The book was brought, and it happened that the passage read out to him was the account of the conspiracy of the two chamberlains, how Mordecai had discovered it, and had warned the king through Esther of their intention to kill him, and how by this means his life had been saved. The king asked what honour and dignity had been bestowed on Mordecai for this service. "There is nothing done for him," answered the servant in attendance. "Who is in the court?" said the king. Now Haman was waiting to ask permission to have Mordecai hanged on the gallows he had erected for that purpose. It was rather an unlucky moment to put forward his request, so when the king's servant replied, "Haman is in the court," the king said, "let him come in." Haman came, and the king said to him,

"What shall be done to the man whom the king delighteth to honour?"

Now Haman thought to himself, whom would the king delight to honour more than myself, so he answered:

"To this man, to this man whom the king delighteth to honour, let the royal robes be brought, which the king himself wears, and the horse that he rides, and the crown royal which is set upon his head. Let all this be

given into the hand of one of the king's most noble princes, that he may array the man whom the king delighteth to honour. Let him bring this man on horseback through the city proclaiming, 'Thus shall it be done to the man whom the king delighteth to honour.'"

Then Ahasuerus said to Haman, "Make haste and take the apparel and the horse, and do as thou hast said to Mordecai the Jew, that sitteth at the king's gate. Let nothing fail of all that thou hast spoken."

Haman dared not disobey, and to argue with the royal tyrant might have meant death, so Haman had to go forth and carry out all the king's commands. He himself had to clothe Mordecai in the royal robes, and to lead his horse through the city, shouting all the while, "Thus shall be done to the man whom the king delighteth to honour."

Then Mordecai came again to the king's gate, whilst Haman hasted to his house mourning. Very little comfort awaited him there, for when his wife and friends heard of all that had just happened, instead of pitying him, they only said, "If Mordecai be of the race of the Jews, before whom thou hast begun to fall, thou shalt surely not succeed against him, but shall surely fall."

Haman reaped as he had sowed. Not many kind words had he bestowed on others, and now, in his dark hour of disgrace, he found none ready to comfort him. And while they were even yet talking, the king's chamberlain came to hurry him on to the queen's feast.

"So the king and Haman came to banquet with Esther the queen."

Yes. The all-important hour had come; and when, during the feast, Esther again heard the king's gracious question, "What is thy petition, Queen Esther, and it shall be granted thee; and what is thy request, and it

shall be performed, even to the half of the kingdom?" she gained courage, and answered:

"If I have found favour in thy sight, oh king, and if it please the king, let my life be given me at my petition, and my people at my request: for we are sold, I and my people, to be destroyed, to be slain, and to perish."

"Then the king Ahasuerus answered and said unto Esther the queen, Who is he, and where is he, that dare presume in his heart to do so? And Esther said, the enemy is this wicked Haman."

At these words Haman trembled, for he knew what his fate would be. The king could not contain himself for anger, and rushed out into the palace garden in a paroxysm of wrath. The miserable Haman fell on his knees before the queen, and there he was found by Ahasuerus, who soon returned with his attendants. He was led away, and by the king's command hung upon the gallows he had raised for Mordecai.

Esther now confessed to the king that she was Mordecai's cousin. Mordecai was summoned to the royal presence, and the king, taking the signet ring which had been given to Haman, presented it to Mordecai.

Esther's work was not yet complete. You must remember that Haman had sent letters throughout all the provinces, ordering the people to fall upon the Jews on a certain day and massacre them. So now Esther threw herself at the king's feet, and with tears in her eyes, implored him to revoke this decree. It grieved the king to see his beautiful wife weeping at his feet, so he held out the golden sceptre and she rose and stood before him.

"For how can I endure to see the evil," she exclaimed, "that shall come unto my people? or how can I endure to see the destruction of my kindred?"

The king told her, that when once a law had been made in Persia it could not be revoked. That is why, when we want to say anything can not be changed, we compare it to a law of the Medes and Persians. But Esther and Mordecai were permitted to write other letters, sealing them with the royal seal, telling the Jews that they were to gather themselves together and to stand for their lives, which meant that when they were attacked they were to defend themselves. So the letters were sent out in all haste, by mounted messengers.

Then Mordecai went from the king's presence in royal robes of blue and white, with a great crown of gold upon his head. And the city of Shushan rejoiced and was glad, and wherever the king's new decree came there was joy and gladness, and many of the people of the land became Jews, for the fear of the Jews fell upon them.

Now, dear children, I want you to draw this lesson from Haman's fate. If you should have superior strength or ability, or power granted you, do not become proud or conceited, or what is worse still, cruel. Never tyrannize over those who are in any way weaker than yourselves. If Haman in his powerful times had been kind and gracious, when trouble overtook him, some friend might have come forward to intercede for him with the king, and his fall might not have been so terrible.

There is just one fact in connection with the history of Esther and Mordecai that I do not like telling you. It is that Haman's ten sons were hanged on the gallows where their father had suffered death.

Would that this great deliverance had not been sullied by any such act of revengeful cruelty! But we must bear in mind that those times were cruel times,

and that barbarous acts of retaliation were not looked upon in the same light as they would be now.

And now we come to the institution of Purim. It took its name from *Pur*, or lot, because the enemies of the Jews cast lots to see on what day their destruction should take place. When Mordecai and Esther had obtained the safety of their people, Mordecai ordered that the Jews should always keep the 14th day of Adar as a day of gladness and feasting, and of sending portions one to another. So to this day we observe Purim in thankfulness to God for the deliverance of the Jews from Haman's cruelty, and also in grateful memory of the good queen Esther, who risked her life to save her people.

Dear children, we cannot pay a better tribute to her memory than by exercising deeds of charity and kindness to those who need them. When we are feasting, let us remember those who would also like to feast, but have not the means; let us send portions to them.

And now one more word before we have finished with Purim. Besides the *feast*, there are some who keep the *fast* of Purim; that is to commemorate Esther's fast, which she kept before she went to the king to entreat for her people. All this story was written down in the chronicles of the kings of Persia and Media, which also relate that when Mordecai rose to the highest position in the land, he continued to work for the good of his people, so that they were happy and prosperous under the rule of Ahasuerus and Esther.

## MAKE YOUR MARK.

IN the quarries should you toil,
Make your mark,
Do you delve upon the soil,
Make your mark.
In whatever path you go,
In whatever place you stand,
Moving swift or moving slow,
With a firm and steady hand,
Make your mark.

Life is fleeting as a shade,
Make your mark.
Marks of some kind must be made,
Make your mark.
Make it while the arm is strong
In the golden hours of youth,
Never, never make it wrong,
Make it with the stamp of truth.
Make your mark.—*Golden Wreath.*

## XXXVI.

## ON CLEANLINESS.

"And Elisha sent a messenger unto him (Naaman), saying, Go and wash in Jordan seven times, and thy flesh shall come again to thee, and thou shalt be clean.

"Wash and be clean."—2 *Kings*, chap. v. 10, 13.

THERE are many blessings which we enjoy which are independent of any actions or efforts of our own, others, on the contrary, which depend in great measure upon ourselves. Among the latter, good health should fill a prominent place. Perhaps those who enjoy that blessing do not feel half grateful enough for it.

As long as you have the rosy cheeks and bright eyes of health, the enfeebled frame and enforced idleness of disease appear to you like hideous but far-off spectres with which you have no concern, but, dear children, that is not the case, and it depends greatly upon yourselves whether you remain strong and healthy or fall a prey to pain and sickness. I do not say that you can always destroy or escape from disease and suffering, but, you might do much to keep those enemies to our welfare at a distance, instead of drawing them towards you, as from ignorance or heedlessness I fear many of us do.

Among the various precepts and rules we find in the Bible, are many which relate to our bodily health—precepts given several thousand years ago, but which are now, as it were, rediscovered, and enforced by the most eminent doctors of the present day. The laws respecting food are doubtless of more importance in the hot countries inhabited by our forefathers, than in this cooler clime

but the strict injunctions concerning infectious diseases, are now being carried out to the fullest extent wherever civilization and science have penetrated. Another law which has a two-fold purpose, the observance of which gives strength and power to mind and body, is that which bids us rest on the Sabbath day and keep it holy.

What a saving influence that blessed rest must have upon the tired frames of the hard-worked man or woman, and even upon our poor fellow-creatures, the patient animals who help us in many of our labours! One of the most essential health-giving laws, which, under ordinary circumstances, can be obeyed without any great difficulty, is the law which refers to cleanliness, and prescribes the frequent and abundant use of water. In various parts of the Bible, in various ways, cleanliness is inculcated. Should not the people to whom those laws were specially addressed give the greatest heed to them? yet it cannot be denied that there are some Jews in the present day who are not as distinguished as they ought to be for cleanliness, either in their person or their homes. The two are generally found together, and how pleasant is a visit to the clean fresh-looking inmates of the well-swept tidy house! I will not venture to describe the effect produced by the contrary. Our brethren, or perhaps I should rather say our sisters, have kept their Oriental taste for bright colours and ornaments of every description, which doubtless corresponded with the bright colours of the eastern lands of our ancestors, but are perhaps somewhat out of harmony with the dusky London sky and surroundings here. I do not object, however, to a touch of brightness here and there, in the shape of a little adornment for our dress or walls, an unconscious reminiscence, maybe, of another far-off clime, where the sun paints the sky in gorgeous tints,

and embroiders the earth with ever-changing patterns, but if, when the eye is attracted by the bright flower or feather, we are made painfully aware of the dirty bonnet they were intended to ornament, or of the unbrushed tangled hair and unwashed face of the wearer, repulsion and disgust are the only feelings they can awaken.

But it is more for the sake of good health than for that of charm and beauty, that I would advocate the cause of cleanliness to-day. There is no doubt that many diseases are mainly due to want of cleanliness. For instance, you may perhaps have heard of the painter's palsy, which is owing to the poisonous effect of the white lead used in house painting and decoration. When the workman puts down his brush, and hastens to eat his dinner, generally a piece of bread and meat that his wife put in his pocket in the morning, he often takes it up with hands stained by particles of lead, and thus mixes poison with his food. And after a short time the painter's face loses its healthy colour, becomes pale and yellow, he has attacks of severe pain, and his hands shake as though he were an aged or intemperate man, and all this misery might have been spared had he cleansed his hands before eating his food. That was a wise as well as a pious ordinance of the Jewish sages, which forbade any person to commence a meal unless he had first washed his hands, and you may be sure that they rightly interpreted the divine will when, in the blessing by which they ordered that act to be accompanied, they declared such washing to be a "command of the Lord of the Universe" who "sanctifies us by his precepts."

How many homes have been made desolate by the inroads of typhus fever, which was brought into the court or street by the filth which was allowed to pollute them, and how many skin diseases are produced merely

by the niggardly use of soap and water! If you could look at your skin through a strong magnifying glass, you would see that it is full of tiny holes. These are the pores, which allow the air to enter the skin and circulate among the veins and arteries, and permit the moisture and waste particles of tissue to exude or come out from it. But if these tiny holes are stopped up by dust or any particles of animal or vegetable matter, the purifying air cannot find its way to the blood, and the moisture which should come through the skin is also unable to reach the surface—thus the blood becomes tainted, and the organs nourished by the blood, weakened or diseased. "A great part of sanitary science," says Sir Lyon Playfair, "can be compressed in that one word cleanliness," and a great part of cleanliness can be compressed in that one word *water*.

It was, perhaps, to prove the effect of pure water that the leper was told by the prophet to wash seven times in the Jordan, and that the fearful malady was overcome by that simple remedy. At all events, among other lessons, the sacred narrative may teach us that the value of water should not be overlooked. We can hardly be grateful enough for the blessing of pure water, equally beneficial for inward and outward use. It might be called, like sleep, "Nature's sweet restorer." How the parched earth smiles after the desired rainfall. Every blade of grass, every herb, and opening flower, refreshed and sparkling, looks thankfully up to the skies from which it has received its welcome shower-bath, and even in the courts and alleys of our crowded towns we seem to breathe a purer and more exhilerating atmosphere, after we have heard the splashing of the rapidly falling raindrops upon the grimy pavement.

Of course, it does not always depend upon us to live

among pure and sweet surroundings, but soap and water we can all of us procure, and if we make good use of both, we shall not only feel fresh and active, ready for work and play, but shall ward off many of the dangers which are always lurking in the vicinity of dirty dwellings of towns and villages.

"Wash and be clean" may seem to you a very simple precept, hardly worth so many words as you have heard about it to day, but had Naaman not followed it he would have remained a hopeless leper; and if you do not obey the rules of cleanliness, you will surely draw upon yourselves and those around you discomfort, illness and suffering.

There appears to be also some correspondence between cleanliness of body and purity or cleanliness of mind. We can hardly imagine the clean, bright face in connection with a dishonest, shifty, dirty mind, and though it may not be easy to explain the cause of our feelings on that subject, I am sure we all have the same instinctive shrinking from, and suspicious distrust of, the man, woman, or child begrimed with dirt—just as we are attracted and swayed in our opinions by the garb of cleanliness which meets and charms the eye, and seems to proclaim a pure, wholesome mind and heart, unstained by guile or deceit.

## GOOD-NIGHT.

CLOSE now thine eyes—rest secure ;
Thy soul is safe enough ; thy body sure ;
He that loves thee, He that keeps
And guards thee, never slumbers, never sleeps.
The smiling Conscience in a sleeping breast
Has only peace, has only rest:
The music and the mirth of kings
Are all but very discord when she sings :
Then close thine eyes and rest secure,
No sleep so sweet as thine, no rest so sure.

*Francis Quarles.*

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